

DWIJENDRA LAL ROY

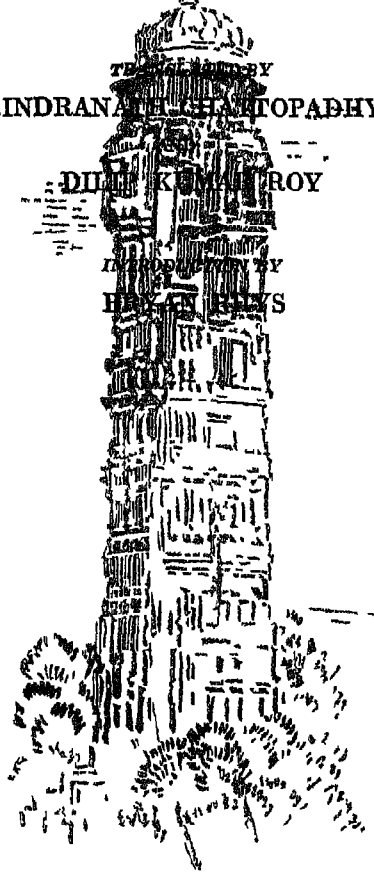
FALL of MEVAR

A DRAMA IN FIVE ACTS

TRANSLATED BY
HARINDRANATH CHATTOPADHYAYA

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Kirti Stambha, Chittor

NALANDA PUBLICATIONS

SIR PHIROZSHAH MEHTA ROAD

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DEDICATED

TO

SRI. K. M. MUNSHI

IN REMEMBRANCE OF OUR

SUDDEN FRIENDSHIP

DILIP

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

IT was in 1927, on the eve of my second visit to Europe, that I requested Sri Harindranath Chattopadhyaya to translate the drama here presented. He very kindly complied though I could offer him only a small remuneration for his pains. But as he was very busy at the time, he achieved the translation in three or four days. This was unfortunate. So I had to apply myself to the task of correcting the numerous errors that had crept in, inevitably. Also, as he had lost touch with the Bengali language for years, having been brought up outside Bengal since his infancy, he missed very often the subtle nuances and emphasis of our words and failed to enter into the suggestive atmosphere of Dwijendra Lal's inimitable language to say nothing of our idioms. Consequently I was forced to alter and even recast a great deal. The songs I had to retranslate entirely on my own. I wanted to keep one or two of his translations but could not take the risk as the songs of the Poet's dramas are rightly regarded by most as exceedingly beautiful: there are many who look upon him as the greatest composer of modern Bengal. Still as Harindranath was the original translator, I have retained his name as one of the translators. For any inadequacy of language, however, I would prefer to accept all the responsibility.

In England Sir Earnest Rhys, the eminent poet and litterateur, very kindly read through this drama in typescript. But although he praised it unstintedly, he advised me to get it revised by a competent Englishman. It was then that I met his son but for whose nobility of character and ready enthusiastic response this drama would perhaps never have seen the light. For he fell in love with the drama at once and devoted a great deal of his valuable time to the work of revision. Happily also, he was a man to whom insight and imagination were native. Otherwise he would not have been able to preserve what I was anxious to preserve before everything else: the old-world atmosphere of the language (an atmosphere of rich and fiery emotions) and its lavish and spontaneous poetry. For Dwijendra Lal was above all a poet and mystic, though for a long time many failed to realise this even in Bengal. But Mr. Rhys did not miss this and so could revise in the right attitude of understanding and imaginative sympathy.

I was overjoyed, and that for a personal reason too. I will hazard mentioning it.

He was my father. So, naturally, I attended the psychic changes in his life with deep sympathy and reverence. I began to revere his patriotism too—the first fire of which made him swiftly famous in the Swadeshi days when he wrote patriotic dramas one after the other. He was a poet and a man of outstanding nobility of character. But he was, as an artist, highly sensitive to the circumambient atmosphere. It was then the heyday of our Bengali patriotism and he caught the contagion, a contagion we should abhor today. But in those days we took patriotism at its face value and so persuaded ourselves that it was the panacea for all the evils our flesh was heir to. We know better now. But in the flush of our patriotic adolescence we all devoutly believed in the gospel of nationalism (which has since sucked mankind down into real hell with the pledge of a phantom heaven) and we all seethed with hatred of everything foreign. How easy, alas, to glare at others as the repository of iniquity forgetting our blackest sins !

It was at this point that Dwijendra Lal became suddenly and utterly sick of patriotism. It was at this turning-point of his life that he wrote *Fall of Mevar*. And it was only then that we, his deep admirers, discovered that patriotism was a false guide.

After this drama the Poet bade farewell to egotistic patriotism and inclined more and more towards mysticism: his last work was a religious-mystic drama woven round the great figure Bhishma of Mahabharata. As I look back I recapture still that long-lost thrill—the thrill of witnessing a great conversion of a great soul. That is why, ever since his premature death, my one desire was to translate this drama where, for the first time, his vision as a seer and poet of humanity transcended his burning love for his parish, his country. His other dramas (e.g., *Ranu Pratap*, *Durgadas*, *Shahjahan*, *Chandragupta*) were certainly more popular but most people will, I think, agree that of all his historical dramas *Mevar Patan* is his most outstanding creation with a message for all times, a message borne home with rare art and mastery of dramatic technique. It is a drama that will live when his patriotic dramas will all have been consigned to the limbo of oblivion.

The song "Darling of soul ! in soul abide" is translated from the poet's drama *Chandragupta* and the song "Why is the moon so beauteous" is taken from his drama *Nurjehan*. These I substitute because of their deeper beauty.

The songs of this drama I have translated only recently under the guidance and inspiration of Sri Aurobindo who revised them all. I altered a few lines under his direction.

INTRODUCTION

DWIJENDRA LAL ROY, though his name is little known as yet in Europe*, has long been acknowledged as the greatest Indian dramatist of modern times. But as the following tragedy will tend to show, his genius was extremely versatile, and he has other claims to fame in his own country. As a poet, he takes rank only after that other great writer of modern Bengal, Rabindranath Tagore. Like him, Dwijendra Lal Roy has permanently enriched the poetry of India, and it has been regretted that he published no more than three books of poems and lyrics—*Mandra* (Tranquillity), *Alekhyā* (Painting), and *Tribeni*.

His name is also linked with those of Tagore and Atulprasad Sen in the great triad of modern Indian composers. Numbers of his songs—lyrical, devotional, patriotic—are sung to this day in the village streets of Bengal. *Amar Desh* and *Amar Janmabhūmī* (My birthplace) are looked upon as the national songs of Bengal, if not of India itself.

It was as a writer of humorous and popular songs that Dwijendra Lal Roy made his first entry into the field of literature, while yet in his teens, and he is now recognised to be the finest satirist and humourist of modern India. Writing of his poems and satires in his "Modern Literature", published in the 'nineties, Tagore hailed them as "the unmistakable signs, not only of a rich and unique vein of humour, but of a remarkable mind which has stepped into the realm of literature to inspire and uplift his countrymen." Best known of all are his comic songs, "*Hasir gan*", which were the first of their kind in India and are still sung before large audiences; his humorous sketches in verse—"Asarhe"—are scarcely less popular, while his farces—*Purvajanma* (Rebirth of a Credulous Miser), *Viraha* (Pangs of Conjugal Separation) and *Prayaschitta* (Pains and Penalties of Would-be Westernisation)—are continually played in the public and private theatres of Bengal.

It is, however, as a dramatist that Dwijendra Lal Roy is most famous in all India. His dramas have been translated into almost every wide-spread Indian language, and have been played throughout the length and breadth of Hindustan. During the last

* Some of his songs have been translated by Otto Von Glasenapp, the German Orientalist, and published in his *Indische Gedichte aus vier Jahrhunderten*. Klabund in *Weltgeschichte in einer Stunde*, refers to him as the most celebrated Indian dramatist of modern times.

twenty years of his life, most of which were spent in the drudgery of a government department in the province of Bengal, he composed ten dramas, historical, social, mythological; five farces; three volumes of poetry; two volumes of comic songs and satirical sketches; two studies in criticism; one opera, and a number of essays and songs and short stories. Thus in the versatility of his literary activities he is justly looked upon as second only to Tagore.

He died in 1918, at the comparatively early age of forty-nine: a stroke of apoplexy had seized him while the pen was in his hand. Thus he was carried off in the height of his powers and literary fame. Shortly after his death, two biographies were published—a remarkable testimony in itself, when it is remembered that nine-tenths of the people of Bengal remain illiterate.

It was inevitable that the names of Dwijendra Lal Roy and Rabindranath Tagore should be closely connected in the annals of modern Indian literature. Unfortunately, the admirers of these two writers came to range themselves, under the influence of controversial minds, in hostile camps, as the partisans of literary rivals. A regrettable estrangement ensued, which separated the two friends during the last five years of Dwijendra's life. One echo only of his well-nigh historic controversy need here be heard:

"I have always", wrote Tagore, in prefacing one of his biographies, "taken deep delight in the poetical gifts of Dwijendra Lal Roy, even when he was comparatively little known to the literary public of Bengal.....The only thing worthy of note, so far as my relationship with him was concerned, is that I have always felt the profoundest admiration for his lofty genius."

Mevar Patan is probably the greatest of all Dwijendra Lal Roy's dramas. The theme is historical and takes us back to the beginning of the 17th century, to the reign of Jehangir, unworthy son of the renowned Emperor Akbar. The action centres round the small independant Hindu state of Mevar, in the province of Rajputana. This province was divided up into a number of lesser states, ruled over by as many independant, chivalrous and war-like chiefs who were constantly warring among themselves. At the beginning of the sixteenth century, Babar, the first Moghul invader, found them too weak and divided to oppose him. One by one, the independant states of Rajputana fell, until, at the time of Akbar's death, every ruler except the Rana of Mevar was compelled to acknowledge the sovereignty of the Moghul Emperor at Delhi, and pay tribute to his court.

But Mevar was to fall at last. Already the capital, Chittore, had been lost during the reign of Akbar. But the rulers of Mevar

INTRODUCTION

still refused to bow down to the Moghuls ; on the beautiful hills of the Aravalli, they founded a new capital, at Udaipur.

It is the epic of the downfall of Mevar, conceived in all its solemnity and grandeur, which forms the subject of this drama.

Last but one of the rulers of Mevar was the great Rana Pratap, whose name is referred to constantly in successive scenes. This almost legendary figure has bequeathed to his countrymen a heroic tradition of bravery, of untold hardships suffered in the name of patriotism and liberty. His proverbial courage is a living memory in the minds of his countrymen ; it inspires them in their last desperate struggles and presides over every phase of the tragedy.

1927

London

BRYAN RHYS

CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

RANA AMAR SINGH	..	Ruler of Mevar.
GOVIND SINGH ..	..	Commander of the Rana's armies.
AJAY SINGH ..	..	His son.
SAGAR SINGH ..	..	The Rana's uncle.
MOHABAT KHAN	..	Sagar Singh's son ; Commander of the Moghul armies.
ARUN SINGH ..	..	Satyavati's son.
JEHANGIR ..	..	Emperor of Hindustan.
HIDAYAT ALI KHAN ABDULLA ..	} ..	Moghul Generals.
MAHARAJ GAJA SINGH	..	Ruler of Jodhpur.
HUSSAIN ..	..	A dependent of Hidayat Ali.
RANI RUKMINI	..	The Rana's Queen.
MANASI ..	..	Her daughter.
SATYAVATI ..	..	Sagar Singh's daughter.
KALYANI ..	..	Govind Singh's daughter and Mohabat Khan's abandoned wife.

Courtiers, soldiers, peasant men and women.

SCENE

The Kingdom of Mevar in Hindustan.

MEVAR PATAN

OR

FALL OF MEVAR

A PLAY IN FIVE ACTS

ACT I

Scene I.

Govind Singh's house. Mid-day. Govind Singh and his son Ajay.

GOVIND SINGH. So the Rana has been informed?

AJAY. Yes, father!

GOVIND SINGH. Who broke the news to him?

AJAY. I cannot tell.

GOVIND SINGH. And what did the Rana say, when he learned that the Moghul army was marching to attack Mevar?

AJAY. The Rana's one desire was to sign a treaty, and make peace with the Moghuls. To-morrow, in the first hour, he will hold an assembly, and he commands all his chieftains to be present. He commands your presence also.

GOVIND SINGH. Why does he summon me?

AJAY. To consult you.

GOVIND SINGH. Concerning this treaty?

AJAY: Yes, father.

GOVIND SINGH. But I have never counselled anyone in such matters, Ajay. All my life has been spent in fighting on the fields of battle. The clash of glittering swords, the mournful blare of bugles, the neighing of steeds, the rending cry of death—these are what I know. Of the making of peace with an enemy, I understand but little. I scarcely know how it is done, Ajay!

Ajay is silent. Govind Singh ponders, with bowed head.

Why does the Rana wish for peace? Did he tell you this?

AJAY. The Rana said that Mevar has grown to be very prosperous of late, nor would he suffer streams of blood to flow through our green and fertile Kingdom.

GOVIND SINGH. And to avert this bloodshed, do you tell me that we must unloose the Moghuls' sandals, and carry them on our heads? (*Sighing*) Yet I knew it would come to this, Ajay. The scared poverty and valour of my younger days have vanished from among us; luxury and soft enjoyment have stepped into their place. On that day when the great Rana Pratap died, I felt within me that the hour of Mevar's downfall had struck. Did not that mighty ruler prophesy with his dying breath that the jewels of Mevar would be sold at auction at the feet of the Moghuls, during his own son's reign? And already the Moghuls are drunk with the dark wine of power. In the fever of their blood, they will destroy us utterly. All will be lost.

AJAY. The Rana also said that the citizens of Mevar lacked the strength to withstand the Moghuls, and that their blood would be shed in vain.

GOVIND SINGH. And do you think so too, Ajay? Are we to be frightened by the scarecrow of defeat and cower down in abject surrender? Ajay, I know that the Moghul is King of Delhi. I know also that it is a great sin to take up arms against a King. But can we forget that the kingdom of Mevar also stands free? Free it shall be so long as Govind Singh draws breath. *He* shall not sell our kingdom. Through seven dark centuries the blood-red banner of Mevar has floated proudly upon her mountain-peaks, defying the tempests and thunder. Shall we suffer that banner to be torn down because the Moghuls' eyes are fierce? Never....Go and tell the Rana that I, for one, shall fight.

(Exit Ajay)

Govind Singh goes to the wall, takes down his sword and belt. Unsheathes the sword, and holds it out.

Dear comrade, so long as you stay in my hands, beware lest the shadow of an insult should fall across the Rana's path. I have been very forgetful of you, trusty friend; is this why you have lost so much of your brightness? Take heart, good comrade. I bid you to war for Mevar's sake. Ere long, you shall drink the hot blood of the Moghuls. Pardon me, O comrade of my life! *(He presses the sword to his breast, then slowly tries to brandish it.)* No.....my hand trembles. I have grown very old.

He sits down with the sword across his knees and rests his head between his hands. His eyes fill.

Lord, my Lord; what have you done? *(He raises his sword and clasps it.)*

Enter Kalyani, his daughter.

KALYANI. Father, what does this mean?

GOVIND SINGH. Listen, Kalyani.

KALYANI. No, no, father; You must lay down that sword. What has made you take it in your hands to-day? Your eyes frighten me, father. Lay your sword down.

GOVIND SINGH. Behold it, Kalyani. See how terrible it is, how terrible, yet how beautiful! Do you know what it lacks?

KALYANI. What?

GOVIND SINGH. Blood.

KALYANI. Whose blood?

GOVIND SINGH. The blood of the Moslems.

KALYANI. Why is this hatred of the Moslems so deep-rooted in your heart?

GOVIND SINGH. Go and ask Mevar, the land of your birth. Why? For seven hundred years the Moghuls have sought again and again to engulf the one Kingdom left free in the land. Again and again they have been forced to retire like waves shattered on the rocks. Of what crime has Mevar been guilty? When men are drunk with the wine of ambition, justice and freedom are no law to them; only the sword can check their frenzied course....But alas! Kalyani, I have grown old, very old.

Kalyani sheds tears.

Why do you weep, Kalyani? Are you afraid? See then, I have sheathed my sword. Why should you be afraid? Come, little mother, come with me.

KALYANI. I am coming, father!

(Exit Govind Singh)

KALYANI. O father, if you could but know! If you could but understand! *(Her eyes fill again)*

Scene II.

The road to Udaipur. Afternoon. Enter Satyavati and her band of peasant-men and women singing in chorus.

Mevar mountain, Mevar mountain!
in whose valleys fought our King
Pratap, a stranger—like thy peak—to
shadow of fear and suffering.
Upon thy plains Padmini's beauty
flared into a fatal flame,
And frenzied warriors round her warred,
though none survived the prize to claim.

Thou wavest still defiantly
thy blood-red banner in the breeze
Quelling alien myrmidons
through seven shining centuries!

Mevar mountain, Mevar mountain!
from whose heights rich rivers fall
Down fertile sapphire-glistening vales
with echoes—rich, perennial!

In thy fair groves the peacocks hymn
thy seasons' myriad-mooded grace,
And from thy glens soft winds bring rumours
of thy heart of tenderness.

Thou wavest still defiantly
thy blood-red banner in the breeze
Quelling alien myrmidons
through seven shining centuries.

Mevar mountain, Mevar mountain!
thy purple peaks impale the cloud!
How round thy brow the Heaven's moonbeams
weave a tremulous mystic shroud!
O ancient home of sylvan glory,
O nest of sleep and harmony,
Who breathest into Mevar's maids
high courage, love and purity!—

Thou wavest still defiantly
thy blood-red banner in the breeze
Quelling alien myrmidons
through seven shining centuries.

As the song ends Ajay Singh comes in.

SATYAVATI. Tell me, are you one of the Rana's soldiers?

AJAY. I am, good mother.

SATYAVATI. Then you can answer my question: is there any truth in what we have heard?

AJAY. What have you heard, kind mother?

SATYAVATI. That the Moghul armies have invaded Mevar.

AJAY. Not yet, but they will come—unless the Rana consents to make peace with them. The Moghul commander has sent an envoy to the Rana to learn, once and for all, whether he is for peace or for war.

SATYAVATI. Are you all ready to fight?

AJAY. We are ready to obey the Rana's commands.

SATYAVATI. Then you do not know what the Rana has decided?

AJAY. No, but he appears to incline towards peace. He has summoned my father to the palace to consult with him.

SATYAVATI. Who is your father?

AJAY. Govind Singh, Commander-in-Chief of the Mevar army.

SATYAVATI. So he is your father? And what does he say?

AJAY. He is for war.

SATYAVATI. Brave news! Brave news! I thank you for it.
(Exit Ajay.)

Can it be possible that the Rana should think of making peace with the Moghuls? The Rana Pratap's son? How can he dream of such a thing? There must surely be some mistake in all this. Friends, wait for me under yonder tree. I shall come back soon.

She runs out.

Scene III.

The Assembly Hall in Udaipur. Morning. Rana Amar Singh seated on a throne, with Chieftains standing on either side. Govind Singh stands apart from the rest.

JAYA SINGH. Rana, now that the Moghul hordes are at the gates of the city, it is the sacred duty of every Rajput in Mevar to offer them battle. We are all of one mind. We are ready to fight.

RANA. Jaya Singh, is it not utter folly for us to attempt to oppose the mighty forces of Jehangir, the acknowledged Emperor of all Hindustan?

KESHAV. The courage of a Kshatriya never calculates, Rana.

KRISHNADAS. Was it folly, think you, that impelled your father, the late Rana Pratap Singh, to defy the Moghuls throughout his reign?

RANA. Rana Pratap? Is this a fitting moment to recall his name? He was more than a man.

SHANKAR. He was a Rajput, Sire.

RANA. No, Shankar, you have belittled him. He was a heaven-sent power, a thunderbolt that shook the earth. He only took the form of a Rajput to glorify our race. Whence he came, whither he has gone, who can say? Shankar, you have forgotten that all men cannot hope to resemble him.

KRISHNADAS. True, Sire, but when we hope that the Rana Pratap's son will follow in his father's steps, do we ask too much? Rana Pratap gave his life for Mevar's liberty. Shall his son accept slavery at the Moghul's hands, and strike not a single blow in self-defence?

RANA. Krishnadas, these are only fine-sounding words. Within the last years, Mevar's citizens have grown wealthy and happy and prosperous. The whole kingdom breathes deeply of plenty and peace. Are we to throw all this away for the sake of vain and martial thoughts and words? Another way lies

open : by paying light tribute to the enemy, we can save ourselves from ruin.

SHANKAR. Tribute to the enemy? Who is this Moghul? Whence comes he? By what right does he claim tribute from the descendants of Lord Shree Ramachandra?

RANA. Shankar, is it not wiser to preserve our land in peace and plenty by making one small gesture of goodwill, rather than to risk our all? What think you, Govind Singh?

GOVIND SINGH. (*startled*) I do not know. All this is beyond me, I do not understand joy, and plenty and peace, as you call them. I only know what sorrow means. From my childhood up, I have been the friend of sorrow. I was brought up in the school of risks and dangers. Rana, for twenty-five years I wandered with your father Pratap Singh through forest and desert land. I have scaled countless mountains without food, without sleep. Seated at his feet, I learned to live a life of denial. I have learned the deep sweetness of sorrow. I have learned to suffer for the sake of others. How sweet it is! How sweet to suffer poverty and want for a great cause! So also, the golden kiss of the sun falls more softly on the roof of the lowly cabin than on the proud pinnacles of palaces. Rana, what days I have known! What glorious days indeed!.....

JAYA SINGH. Why are you silent, Govind Singh? Speak on.

GOVIND SINGH. What is there left for me to say? And yet.....and yet.....I have seen the dwellings of my godlike king pulled down, and pleasure-palaces springing up in their place. In the shadow of that mountain which once re-echoed to his glorious name, I have seen the pleasure-mongers build their bowers. Of all his victories, what is left? With these feeble eyes of mine, I have seen his fiery grandeur melting away and vanish into the skies. What is left to us now, Jay Singh? Only the last faint gleam of that faded glory. And nothing do I see but a dying splendour lying on a bed of death, gazing upon us with dulled and piteous eyes, waiting for the final hour.

KESHAV. So long as you live, Govind Singh, that splendour will not fade.

GOVIND SINGH. I? What can I do, Keshav Singh? My days are numbered. I am old. Scarcely can these palsied hands of mine grasp the sword. My bones decay within my body until I may not command them. But even so, O Rana, I feel a burning desire within me. I would be out among the forests, on the mountains, to suffer sweet sorrow for the sake of the holy Motherland....to weep and to share the sorrows of my brothers. O God, O cruel God, to think that you have robbed me even of that strength which I once had to bear all sorrows!

Govind Singh is silent. The Assembly is dumb.

RANA. But, Govind Singh.....every head in Aryavarta has bowed before the Moghuls' feet. Is it not sheer madness that little Mevar should try and stand before the innumerable world-conquering host?

GOVIND SINGH. Rana, I have no more words to say.

RANA. And I.....I hold that little good can come of our resistance in this hour. We will make peace with the Moghul general. Let his envoy be summoned.

(Exit soldier.)

GOVIND SINGH. Rana Pratap, Rana Pratap! May the sky veil your face from this woeful pronouncement and cloud your ears! Thunder, over-ride these abject words in the deafening angers of your voice! Mevar, may earth split open and devour you, or ever you bow in shame beneath the Moghul yoke!

(Enter the Envoy)

RANA. Go and tell your general that we are ready to sign a treaty of peace.

Satyavati rushes in

SATYAVATI. Never! Never! Noble chiefs, arm yourselves for battle. If the Rana will not lead you, I will be your general!

GOVIND SINGH. Who art thou, mother, that comest to stand like lightning transfixed in the deepening darkness? Who art thou? What deep and tender voice do I hear?

RANA. Who art thou?

SATYAVATI. I am only a peasant woman. From village to village, throughout the Kingdom of Mevar I go, singing the praises of the Motherland. That is all you need to know.

Movements among the Assembly, Murmurs, then cries of "wonderful, wonderful!"

SATYAVATI. Noble chiefs, let the Rana be. Leave him to dream his dreams of pleasure in the palace bowers of Udainagar. I will lead you to the battlefield.

GOVIND SINGH. How can this be? Is this the fire of second youth which I feel mounting in my blood? What ecstasy is this? What mad delight? Lords and Chieftains, it is for us to rescue son of Rana Pratap Singh from this deep disgrace. Shatter the painted toys which are his playthings!

He picks up an iron bolt and wildly hurls it against a mirror which shivers into fragments.

RANA. Govind Singh, the die is cast, and I shall fight. Messenger of the Moghuls, it is war! Go, bid them bridle my stallion.

SATYAVATI. Victory to the Rana of Mevar!

ALL. Victory to the Rana of Mevar!

Scene IV.

Mohabat Khan's house at Agra. Dawn. Commander Mohabat Khan and Abdulla the Moghul General, are discovered.

MOHABAT. I hear that Hidayat has been appointed General.

ABDULLA. Yes, Janab.

MOHABAT. Hidayat! Are you sure that the news is true?

ABDULLA. Certain. The Emperor has set him at the head of an army fifty thousand strong.

MOHABAT. Hidayat.....a general! After all, why not? Real merit, in these times, is accounted but little men despise it. There are mushrooms in plenty to be found springing out of every dung-heap.

ABDULLA. True, Janab. Hidayat Ali Khan became Khan Khanan Bahadur just because he happened to be the Emperor's nephew.

MOHABAT. Nobody quarrels with him on that account. But to be put at the head of a great army!..Inayat Khan, his brother-in-law, is to accompany him, I believe?

ABDULLA. He may.

MOHABAT. Inayat Khan knows what fighting means. The Emperor was probably well aware of that, and made Hidayat commander in name only. The real commander is Inayat, I'll wager.

ABDULLA. Even so, one doesn't become commander, even in name, unless one can bear the sound of a gun.

MOHABAT. Let that pass. The coming war with Mevar—well it's not difficult to foretell what kind of a war it will be.

ABDULLA. Did the Emperor ask you to take up arms?

MOHABAT. He did.

ABDULLA. Then why did you decline?

MOHABAT. Mevar is the land of my birth. If the Emperor commanded me to go to Bengal, the Deccan, Kabul, or to any other place for that matter, I would be ready to start this minute. But I cannot bear the idea of joining him in an attack on Mevar.

ABDULLA. Perhaps you are right; Mevar is your birthplace. Give me leave to go now, Khan Saheb. It is growing late. I salute you.

MOHABAT. And I you.

(Exit Abdulla.)

This is great news indeed! Our Hidayat Ali the commander of an army! You might as well lay hold of a tottering hunchback and force him to mount a horse saddled in gold! Well.... Well....

Scene V.

Camp of the Moghuls. Noon. The Moghul Commander Khan Khanan Hidayat Ali Khan Bahadur and his attendant Hussain.

HIDAYAT. Hussain, it is easier to conquer these unbelievers than to eat jam.

HUSSAIN. Janab, it is not so easy as you think. Through seven long centuries of Moghul rule this Province has held its head high. No one has made these Rajputs bow the neck as yet—no, not even the Emperor Akbar himself.

HIDAYAT. Akbar! You forget that he had a commander worth next to nothing. Ah! If only Khan Khanan Hidayat Ali Khan had been living then, history would have had a different tale to tell.

HUSSAIN. Why do you say that Akbar's commander was not worth the name? Man Singh—

HIDAYAT. Man Singh a commander? If that is so..then...

Enter cook.

COOK. Dinner is ready, master.

HIDAYAT. Can you fight?

COOK. Chicken cutlets, master.

HIDAYAT. I am not talking about chicken cutlets. I am talking about war, war, war.

COOK. Yes, master, roasted mutton.

HIDAYAT. He is stone deaf, and cannot hear a word. None the less, he speaks well. We shall make roasted mutton of them too. Go. I am coming.

(Exit cook.)

Hussain, we shall roast mutton.

HUSSAIN. Mutton? What mutton?

HIDAYAT. Who but that flock of sheep that call themselves Rajputs?

HUSSAIN. You will pardon me, Janab, but I cannot agree with you there.

HIDAYAT. Hussain, you have much to learn. And now that you are serving with me, your chance has come. Use it well. It will stand you in good stead, some day.

HUSSAIN. Vasty elephants have melted away under the firing of guns and the flashing of swords. Let us see what gnats will do in the coming war.

HIDAYAT. Hussain, you have used a word that was disrespectful. Remember that I am Commander. I can have your head chopped off this very minute, if I wish.

HUSSAIN. I know it, Sir Commander.

HIDAYAT. I am glad that you call me so. I am the Commander. You must always bear that in mind.

HUSSAIN. I will. But the conquest of Mevar will not.

HIDAYAT. I have only to shew my fist once—only once, mark me—and you shall see how they'll crumple up!

HUSSAIN. The fist will have to be a mighty one, Sir.

HIDAYAT. Not so mighty as all that. You may go now. I must go and dine. (*Hussain is about to go*) One word more, Hussain. Never by any chance forget that I am the Commander.

HUSSAIN. No Sir Commander, it is unforgettable.

(*Exit*)

HIDAYAT. Conquer these unbelievers! Why, a couple of gunshots and we shall scatter them helter-skelter, like goats. It is almost beneath my dignity to go and fight with them at all!

Scene VI.

The banks of the lake Udaisagar. Morning. Manasi, Princess of Mevar, walks to and fro, singing.

Come unto me, even as a beggar I implore
Accept pure love my heart would spill—that nevermore
May hearts be weaned from love, for this alone I live:
O drain me dry, all all I have I yearn to give.

My soul, now grown an alien in the land of Night,
Is fain no more of tears, a questioner of light,
Nor sighs nor sorrows pining for a vanished home:
How can he weep who, knowing love, has forsworn gloom?
I feel—I have at last loved One whom none could name:
A new breeze blows, a sweet dawn blossoms on dark's stem.

Enter a beggar-woman with a blind boy.

BEGGAR. Alms, mother, give me alms.

MANASI. You are welcome. Is this your child?

BEGGAR. No, he is my sister's child. He was born blind. He has no mother.

MANASI. Poor little thing! Tell me, will you give me this child? I will be a mother to him.

BEGGAR. No, he could never live without me.

MANASI. Well then, let him stay with you; but will you bring him to see me once every day? Here are alms for you.

BEGGAR. God's blessing upon you, little mother.

(*Exit*)

MANASI. How sweet is the sound of this beggar-woman's blessing to my ears! How sweet to feel—

AJAY. Manasi.

MANASI. Ajay, come, I am very happy. Come and share my overflowing happiness.

AJAY. What makes you so happy, Manasi?

MANASI. I am brimming over with joy. My heart is fuller than a river in autumn. But one moment past, a beggar-woman blessed me, and went her way.

AJAY. Who would not bless you with a warm heart, Manasi? Scarcely one day passes but I hear the praises of Mevar's princess sung in valley and field.

MANASI. Is it so indeed? Can I not hear them too, Ajay?

AJAY. You have only to step from the threshold of your door, Manasi, and you will hear.

MANASI. But I never wander abroad. Here, in the hospital which I have founded, I pass all my days tending the sick.

AJAY. Your life is indeed blessed. (*Suddenly*) Manasi, I have come to-day to bid you farewell.

MANASI. Farewell? Where are you going?

AJAY. To the battlefield.

MANASI. O....when are you going?

AJAY. Early to-morrow morning.

MANASI. When will you return?

AJAY. There is no knowing. And....and....who knows whether I shall ever return?

MANASI. (*startling*) Why do you say that?

AJAY. I may well be killed in the war.

MANASI. (*with bowed head*) Oh....

AJAY. Manasi, if I do not come back.....

MANASI. What will happen then?

AJAY. You will be sad, will you not?

MANASI. Yes.

AJAY. Yes? And is that all? Manasi, do you know—that I love you—that I love you deeply?

MANASI. I know you love me.

AJAY. But do you love me?

MANASI. Yes, I do.

AJAY. You say it so coldly, Manasi...You must surely love some other.....

MANASI. I love every human being.

AJAY. You are cruel.

MANASI. Why, Ajay, must I love no one else but you? Do you wish my heart to be entirely your own? That would be very selfish.

AJAY. Are you really such a child, Manasi?

MANASI. You mock me, Ajay. Why do you blame me? Is it a sin to love all men? If so, punish me; I bow my head.

AJAY. I! Who am I to punish you?

MANASI. Yes, you must punish me. Ajay, you are going away to the war. The greater the number of men that you kill, the greater your glory and renown. How then can you say that the more I love the greater my sin?

AJAY. I stand rebuked. Fool that I was to presume.... to imprison so large a heart within the narrow precincts of my own....Forgive me Manasi!....Yes, scatter the radiance of your love far and wide about you....I leave you free..... absolutely free to gather all heaven and earth under the aegis of your soul....Farewell.

(Exit)

MANASI. Farewell....Like dark shadows, tyranny and injustice stretch across the world. How often war fails of its end, when it is waged to destroy them! For how can they be destroyed by war, which is in itself a heartless thing? Go, Ajay, go and fight. Strive to keep your hands as free from stains as may be in battle. May my good wish be your armour....

(Suddenly)

What will happen to those who are going to their wounds, to death? Are not their mothers and daughters and wives praying to God for their safety as fervently as I? How many prayers will be said in vain, how many hopes will be dashed down? Is there no remedy for all this suffering?

She looks up to heaven with tearful eyes. Suddenly a strange light comes into her face, she clasps her hands.

I....I too will go, to help the sufferers. The dead I cannot save, but the wounded at least I may tend and comfort.

Enter Rani Rukmini.

RANI. Manasi, have you heard the news?

MANASI. What news, mother?

RANI. That your father has gone to fight?

MANASI. Yes, I have heard.

RANI. Fight the Moghuls, you know.

MANASI. Yes, I know.

RANI. You don't seem to be much impressed. The news seems to come to you as softly and as easily as the eating of a pat of butter. Do you know that many men will die in the war?

MANASI. Perhaps they will.

RANI. Perhaps? Is there any doubt about it? Especially in a war with these dreadful Moghuls! There's no hope for us this time. Those who have gone to the battle will die, every one, and as for those who have been left behind, Heaven alone knows how they will fare.

MANASI. Well, how can I help? What do you want me to do, mother?

RANI. And to think that your marriage was settled! What with this war, however, shall we find the time to celebrate it?

MANASI. Will it matter much, if we never do?

RANI. Matter! If you don't get married, why, what will happen?

MANASI. What is going to happen?

RANI. It would never do for a girl like you to remain unmarried, you know. We had settled on a match between the Jodhpur Raja's son and you. But it can't come off now. Everybody will be killed. All is lost, all, all! They could so easily have had the war after the marriage, but the Rana would not listen.

MANASI. Mother, do not fret. My mind is bent on something far more important than marriage.

RANI. More important than marriage? You make one gasp!

MANASI. I am going out to the battlefields.

RANI. What are you saying?

MANASI. Yes, mother. Have you not just told me that many men die in war? I can do nothing for those who die, but surely I can serve the wounded, in love and humility?

RANI. O she is courting ruin! No doubt this explains Ajay's visit. He's been filling your head with nonsensical ideas!

MANASI. No, mother, he is not to blame. Ajay has gone to fight and kill. I shall go to save.

RANI. No, that can never be.

MANASI. But it can be, mother.

RANI. You shall not go.

MANASI. Peace be with you. I am going. You know me too well to say more. Go in, mother. I shall set forth, and within a few hours. I must go now and prepare for the journey.

RANI. With whom will you go?

MANASI. With Ajay Singh's army.

RANI. Exactly as I feared! The Rana has gone away at a most awkward moment. And now there is no one here to bring her to her senses.

MANASI. If my father were here, he would be the first to give his consent. I know him well. His heart is always full of tenderness and compassion.

RANI. Yes, and you behave in this fashion because he neglects you. I feel certain that the end of it all will be a hideous calamity.

MANASI. Mother, pray why must you fret so? Remember, I shall be doing all that lies in my power to lighten the sorrows and sufferings of others. Go, mother, and do not fret for me.

RANI. Folly and wickedness! Folly and wickedness! Never did I see such....

(Exit Rani)

MANASI. *(clasping her hands again)*. O, who has filled the chambers of my heart with sudden joy! A new thrill courses through my blood! How childish—all this making of marriage vows! O, to live a life of dedication!....

Scene VII.

Battlefield of Mevar. Evening. Hidayat Ali and his companion Hussain are seated inside an open tent. Two soldiers stand at the entrance with drawn swords. Sounds of battle without.

HIDAYAT. Hussain, have you succeeded in discovering the real strength of the Mevar Army?

HUSSAIN. In round numbers, about fifty thousand strong.

HIDAYAT. Indeed! And so far, these Rajputs have not yet shown any great desire to take to flight, have they?

HUSSAIN. Not yet, Janab.

HIDAYAT. But they have been fighting since morning, you know. It is high time they took to their heels, you must admit.

HUSSAIN. True; but apparently they have resolved to stay and fight instead.

HIDAYAT. It almost seems as though they knew something about warfare, what do you say?

HUSSAIN. I am almost inclined to think so too, Janab.

HIDAYAT. There....there did you hear? That is the war-cry of the Rajputs. Our soldiers don't seem to be shouting at all. I hope they are still fighting?

HUSSAIN. They must be. But may I suggest that you go out and see for yourself? Would it not be as well to have just one look at your army and gain some notion of the operations. You are a commander you know; you must remember that.

HIDAYAT. Yes, I am a commander. But there is really not the slightest need for me to leave this tent. My brother-in-law Inayat Khan is quite capable of fighting the whole pack of them and putting them to rout singlehanded. Why should I fight them, Hussain?

HUSSAIN. That is perfectly true, Janab. There....again! The war-cry of the Rajputs! Again! things don't seem very promising for us, do they?

HIDAYAT. No, indeed, they do not. Will you go and see what is happening outside?

HUSSAIN. Whatever you command.

HIDAYAT. No, I think you had better stay here. You see, ever since my childhood I have never been left alone. Company has become a habit. Not a very good habit, is it?

HUSSAIN. Almost bad, I should say.

HIDAYAT. There, again!

HUSSAIN. This time, it sounds a little nearer.

HIDAYAT. What are you saying? (*He lays hold of Hussain.*)

Enter some soldiers.

HIDAYAT. What news, soldier?

SOLDIER. Sir, our general Shamsher Khan has fallen.

HIDAYAT. What? And the other generals? Are they safe?

SOLDIER. They are in the thick of the fight.

HIDAYAT. Is Inayat Khan alive?

SOLDIER. He is still alive.

HUSSAIN. You may go now.

(Exit soldier.)

HIDAYAT. There you are, Hussain. The news is not very encouraging, is it?

HUSSAIN. I fear it is almost depressing Sir Commander! Do you remember how you told me the other day that you had only to show your fist to crumple up Mevar, and I answered: 'if so it will have to be a mighty fist?' You see now that my poor speech was little less than prophetic. Listen....it sounds much nearer now.

HIDAYAT. There you are. You never can tell what will happen in war, can you Hussain?

HUSSAIN. No, I suppose one can't.

Enter a soldier

HIDAYAT. What news of the battle, soldier?

SOLDIER. My lord, there is wild disorder in our army. Our soldiers are breaking rank, and taking to flight.

HIDAYAT. What dreadful news, what dreadful news!

HUSSAIN. And this noise we hear, is it the clamour of confusion, spreading through our ranks?

SOLDIER. It is, Sir.

(Exit soldier)

HUSSAIN. Commander, be so good as to persuade yourself to leave this tent for a little; go and see what is happening to your soldiers. One glimpse of you will greatly hearten your generals, especially as you are their great commander.

HIDAYAT. How can that help now, Hussain? (*Makes a gesture of despair*).

Enter another soldier

SOLDIER. Inayat Khan has been killed in action.

HIDAYAT. What?...what do you say? Inayat Khan killed! Impossible! There again...the war-cry of the Rajputs! It is very near this time.

Another soldier comes running in.

SOLDIER. We are undone, master!

HIDAYAT. I knew that already. Anything worse?

HUSSAIN. What can be worse than the worst?

SOLDIER. Our soldiers have all taken to their heels. The Rajputs are charging us on horse-back with the hot speed of whirlwinds!

HIDAYAT. Help Hussain, help!...save me!

cries in the distance

"Fly, fly, run for your lives."

HIDAYAT. But which way am I to run?

HUSSAIN. This way.

Hidayat is about to fly when a shot is fired and he falls to the ground. Enter Ajay Singh with the Moghul banner in his hand followed by his Rajput men.

AJAY. Victory to the Rana of Mevar!

ALL. Victory to the Rana of Mevar!

HIDAYAT. (*Lifting up his hands in supplication*) Don't kill me....I am not dead yet....Don't kill me! Take me prisoner if you like, I don't mind that.

AJAY. Who are you?

HIDAYAT. I am the commander of the Moghul forces.

AJAY. The Moghul commander? And what was he doing in this tent while the battle was raging outside?

HIDAYAT. I...I...was....well....you see! There was an excellent reason....only....I can't remember it at the moment. Don't kill me....Save me!

AJAY. Live, chicken-hearted commander—you that came like a trembling coward to fight the brave and unconquerable Rajputs!

Publish the news of our victory throughout the length and breadth of Rajputana.

HIDAYAT. By all means, by all means....I have no objection....so long as you consent to spare my life.

(Exeunt Ajay Singh and soldiers)

Praise be to Allah, I am saved....but oh, I am thirsty, thirsty!

Scene VIII.

Night on the battlefield. The dead and dying lie where they have fallen. Manasi is walking among them; soldiers accompany her bearing torches, stretchers etc.

MANASI. Soldiers, go, some of you, to the other side of the field; I will remain here.

(Exeunt soldiers)

O, what an appalling sight! What numbers of dead! Groans heart-rending...how infinitely sad! My God, why all this...in your world, where you are the guardian! And when shall all these senseless forces of suicide pass away from this world. How hideous! I never knew war could be so hideous—this untended agony, torn limbs...I cannot bear it any longer.

1ST WOUNDED. O, what torture!

MANASI. Where are you, poor unfortunate sufferer?

SOLDIER. Here, here. Who are you?

MANASI. Hush, don't speak. *(She begins to bandage his wounds and signs to a soldier to bring her medicine in a cup.)* Take courage. *(The soldier drains the cup.)*

2ND WOUNDED. Oh....

MANASI. Have patience. They shall come and tend you. *(She nods to a soldier.)* Have patience; I will return very soon.

3RD WOUNDED. O death...death would come as a blessing now.

Manasi goes to him

O what unbearable torture!

MANASI. He is breathing still. Soldier, attend to this wounded brother, where's the stretcher?

HIDAYAT. What terrible thirst, what terrible thirst!

MANASI. *(Brings a cup of water to Hidayat)* Here, take and drink.

Hidayat. I am saved. Praise be to Allah!

Enter Ajay Singh with his soldiers

AJAY. Who are you in this darkness? Why, can it be the princess of Mevar?

MANASI. Is that Ajay?

AJAY. Yes, Manasi—

MANASI. Ajay, tell the soldiers who are with you that I am here to serve the wounded. I have few men to help me.

AJAY. Can any soldier help you?

MANASI. Let them carry these wounded to my tents of service.

AJAY. Soldiers, bring some more stretchers.

(Soldiers go out)

MANASI. How strange, Ajay! Joy uplifts my heart in the very midst of this sorrow!

AJAY. How glorious the light, Manasi!

MANASI. Where is the light, Ajay?

AJAY. In your face. Here, in this battlefield, where terrors of darkness compete with agonies of man's suicide, where you almost feel the unseen agents of the Devil grinning round you.... what radiant light is this, on your face! Can this be human, this sunrise of soul in our world of tombs and shadows? Manasil

(He takes her hand)

MANASI. *(moved)* Ajay. *(Her eyes glisten in the light of torches around)*

Scene IX.

The Royal road to Udaipur. Enter a band of peasant men and women singing. Behind them come Amar Singh, Govind Singh, Ajay Singh and others. The band is led by Satyavati.

SONG

Mothers and maids, awake, awake!
Welcome your warriors home who for our country
burned their lives to stake.

Mothers and maids, awake, awake!

Dark hordes who hurled their phalanxed might
Our ancient race to ruin and blight,
Only incarnadined our valiant
sabres with their angry blood:

Your sons and lovers smote their pride
And with a richer wrath replied,—
When with their deep sunfire of courage
they chased the alien thunder-cloud.

Mother and maids, awake, awake!
Welcome your warriors home who for our country
burned their lives to stake.

Mothers and maids, awake, awake!

This marvel victory of Mevar
Proclaim—a glory nought shall mar,
Blow blow your conches, rain rain your flowers,
light light your coloured carnivals,

Only to those who, far away,
Lie slain in battle—your homage pay
With a few tears—lone souls of flame,
who for your honour gave their all.

ACT II

Scene I.

*An apartment in Sagar Singh's house in Agra—Morning.
Raja Sagar Singh and his grandson Arun.*

SAGAR. Who could have believed it? The way Amar Singh pounded these Moghuls to atoms during the last war is truly extra-ordinary.

ARUN. Rana Amar Singh is a hero. Heavens blessings be on his head!

SAGAR. In his young days, Amar was an impossibly vain and idle fellow. Nobody could have dreamt that he would turn out so well.

ARUN. Grandfather, you forget that Maharsi Valmiki was a vagabond in his youth.

SAGAR. Who is Maharsi Valmiki? Isn't he our Tulsi Das's son?

ARUN. Have you never heard of the great sage Valmiki? Fie, fie, grandfather! What do you mean? He was a great, great poet.

SAGAR. O he was, was he? That's as good as saying that he is past and gone. I don't remember that I ever set eyes on him in my life.

ARUN. That is not at all strange, grandfather; it so happens that he was born in the golden age.

SAGAR. What age?

ARUN. In the Golden Age.

SAGAR. O, I see....that was a little before my time, wasn't it? But I have heard of Valmiki. He was a priceless humourist, wasn't he?

ARUN. What do you mean, grandfather? Don't you know that he was the author of the Ramayana?

SAGAR. Dear me! And the Ramayana, is that a nice book?

ARUN. For shame, grandfather, for shame! Do you really mean to say that you have never read the Ramayan? The Lord Ramchandra is our ancestor. Don't you really know anything about Him? For shame!

SAGAR. Where could I find the time to read, my lad? All my life has gone in endless fighting, fighting....

ARUN. Have you ever fought in a war, grandfather?

SAGAR. O, and what battles! But you were still in the land of the unborn then; you can hardly....

ARUN. But with whom did you fight?

SAGAR. With....eh....with....well! to tell you the truth I can't remember now. It was so many years ago.... all that I can remember is that I did fight. It was in those far-off days when your mother....

ARUN. Where is my mother, grandfather?

SAGAR. Nobody knows. One morning she woke up calling on the name of her country, and by the time the evening came, she was nowhere to be found.

ARUN. And my father?

SAGAR. He was always a little queer in the head. The end of it was that he went off to the Guzrat war with Maharaj Gaja Singh; I daresay he was killed fighting there.

ARUN. And my mother; where is she? In Mevar?

SAGAR. She may be.

ARUN. Grandfather, why have you left Mevar and come here? Why, your brother Pratap Singh gave his life for his country....

SAGAR. And that is the very reason why he died so young....poor fellow! I had warned him against it you know—I did what I could—but he wouldn't listen to me; that shows you how little I was to blame.

ARUN. I hear that the peasant-poets sing his praises to this very day, in land—day after day.

SAGAR. But he is dead, and dead, and dead; so how does that help matters, pray? The poor wretch can't hear the praises, can he? That reminds me of a little incident in our childhood. (*more serious*)

One day a mongoose was fighting a snake before our very eyes. I laid a wager that the mongoose would win. Pratap did not believe it. The mongoose, fixing his gaze on the snake's head, leaped, now to this side, now to that, while the snake darted its wild and angry hood at the mongoose again and again. At last the mongoose bit the head of the snake with its sharp white teeth and the snake lay dying slowly, striking its wounded hood against the hard earth. It is the business of the mongoose to kill the snake, my dear boy. How can the snake hope to survive in a battle against it? That is why I sided with the mongoose. Pratap ignorantly sided with the snake.

ARUN. But, grandfather, what about the battle of Devar, Pratap Singh's last brilliant victory, when he dealt such a blow to the Moghuls?

SAGAR. My boy, what is the use in trying to fight Moslems? They have contrived in some mysterious way to get the key to the secret of thriving in the midst of massacres and exterminations. Besides, even if their numbers were reduced, they can always begin converting Hindus to their faith and swell their numbers again. Talk of the Hindus....they are foolish. They

ACT II—SCENE I

never think of converting Moslems in their turn. And never reclaim a Hindu if he once becomes a Moslem, no not even by accident. They have no practical sense, the Hindus.

ARUN. How do you mean?

SAGAR. See here; your uncle Mohabat Khan turned Moslem in no time. Now can you see Abdulla turning Hindu? Is it likely? Not in a hundred years.

ARUN. Then why didn't *you* become a Moslem, grandfather?

SAGAR. Grandfather's courage just fell short of it. My son had unbounded courage. He never hesitated in any thing. But for all that, you must not forget that I paved the way for him. You must not forget that if I had not joined the Moghuls and fought for their cause, my son could never have become a Moslem so easily, and changed his name to Mohabat Khan.

ARUN. O what courage, grandfather! You should have become a Moslem. A Hindu who has never read or heard of the Ramayana would be far wiser to—

SAGAR. Read the Ramayana? Why that's all stuff and nonsense.

Enter Abudulla Saheb.

Here comes Abdulla Saheb. My respects to you, sir.

ABDULLA. I salute you, Rana.

SAGAR. Rana? Who is Rana?

ABDULLA. You.

SAGAR. How have I become the Rana so suddenly, and of what place am I the Rana?

ABDULLA. You are the Rana of Mevar.

SAGAR. How is this? I thought Amar Singh was the Rana of Mevar! Surely—

ABDULLA. To-day the Emperor has appointed *you* the Rana of Mevar.

SAGAR. What in the name of all that is wonderful do you mean?

ABDULLA. He orders you to go to Chittore to-morrow.

SAGAR. To Chittore? And why?

ABDULLA. That is to be your capital.

SAGAR. And Udaipur is, I suppose, Amar Singh's capital?

ABDULLA. You see it's like this, he is Rana no more, the Emperor has deposed him.

SAGAR. But is he going to give up his kingdom for the asking?

ABDULLA. He must.

SAGAR. Does this mean that I shall have to wage a fresh war against him? No Saheb, in that case I won't be Rana.

ARUN. But why not, grandfather? Weren't you telling me just now that you knew all about fighting, that your whole

life was spent in warfare? Why then miss this gorgeous chance of showing how war-like you are?

SAGAR. Arun! What are you saying? No, Saheb, I hardly feel like fighting. I am willing to give my head in the Moghul's service, but I will not go and fight. If fight I must, why should I not fight for my own country, pray? Nobody ever told me that I would have to fight.

ABDULLA. But you will not have to fight. We shall do all the fighting that must be done. Your duty will merely be to live very quietly in the fort of Chittore, never forgetting that from henceforth you are the Rana.

SAGAR. Suppose Amar Singh attacks Chittore?

ABDULLA. He will not. He has never done so as yet. Why should he suddenly take it into his head to attack it?

SAGAR. Pardon me, Sir, but isn't your logic rather unconvincing? Might you not just as well say that a man will not die in the future simply because he has never died in the past? Then it follows from that, doesn't it, that you did not succeed in getting married the other day?

ABDULLA. Bless my soul, what curious logic! What do you mean by saying I did not succeed in getting married the other day?

SAGAR. Why you see, you had never been married before you got married the other day. The logic is yours, not mine, Syed Saheb, if you will pardon me for saying so. Why are you smiling, Arun? If a snake hasn't bitten you in the past, does that prove it won't bite you in the future?

ABDULLA. Come, come, Sir, jesting apart, why are you scared?

SAGAR. How can one feel anything but scared in the circumstances! I am offended and disgusted with the whole business I don't want to be a Rana. I won't have it, I say.

ABDULLA. But why not see the Emperor yourself, and tell him all that you have to say?

SAGAR. Come, then, we shall. But really this is a most downright cowardly trick, to get me into their grip and then make me Rana against my own will. Why, if anything untoward were to happen... Lord, who knows what is written in my fate? Rank injustice, utter heartlessness I call it. Come Arun, let us go.

Scene II.

A Royal apartment in the Palace of Udaipur. Dawn.

Manasi singing alone a song to Krishna.

The world outflowers into beauty
having glimpsed thy lovelit Face,
Our toneless hearts are quivering conches
wooded by thy breath of tenderness.
Life's frozen void now overbrims,
A burden of bliss and heaving hymns,
The skies are rapt....the sun and moon
outpour a mystic radiance,
Sere grass-blades ripple into rapture,
parched rivers swirl and dance.

With one spark of thy glance, Beloved,
the forest flames in a passion of bloom ;
One flicker of smile makes earth a scene
of luminous joy vexed by no gloom,
And when thou speakest—melodies
Weave Heaven's haunting harmonies
Whose briefest cadence makes the soul
a house of echoes lingering :
Even the dumb at thy command
thy bards become, O Flutist King !

O Presence round whom spring-winds hover !
thy hue's a torrent of golden sun,
Thy tresses a heave of dark-blue Night
and feet with tender lotus spun !
Thy arms even as the creepers green
To none deny their clasp serene :
How every atom of thy Form
beckons to all with equal grace !
Who will not swell thy choral choir
and hymn thy holy loveliness ?

Enter Ajay.

MANASI. Who is that ? Ajay !

AJAY. Manasi !

MANASI. Why have you not come for so many days ? Have you been ill ?

AJAY. No....

MANASI. I sought news of you from your father. Did he tell you ?

AJAY. No, Manasi, he did not. But why are you sitting here alone?

MANASI. I was singing a song, and....I was thinking....

AJAY. What were you thinking?

MANASI. I was thinking....I was thinking, that man, after all, is but a poor vain creature. This war has taught me much. I know now that man is a weakling, for all his hollow boastings. One touch of a sword-blade and he is laid low. One stroke of fever, and he becomes as helpless as a child. And how, when these seeds of death are sown in men's blood, how can they hate one another, do one another harm? What do you say, Ajay? Why do you gaze at me so intently?

AJAY. Once again I see in your face that soft light which I first saw shining there on a day memorable in my life.

MANASI. When was that, Ajay?

AJAY. That day when we met on the battle-field by night. In the half-gloom of the dying light, you were transfigured before me and became an image of peace and compassion. In that moment, my all too eager love for you melted suddenly away in one deep sigh of immeasurable despair.

MANASI. Why do you say despair, Ajay?

AJAY. Must you hear, Manasi? Then I will tell you all. When I saw that strange light on your face I felt it would be vain for me to try and hold you. I saw that you were not a creature of this earth but a symbol, a sign....a glim let sleep from Heaven to be our guest for a brief spell. Had the sky been a playhouse, where every star was a player with the moon-beams for orchestra, then you, O my love, would have figured as the heroine in that divine drama. In exchange for my adoration I crave....only one drop of sympathy, Manasi! Will you not grant me this?

Ajay takes Manasi's hand just when the Rani enters. Ajay lets her hand go.

RANI. (Sternly) Ajay Singh!

MANASI. Why have you come, mother?

RANI. Ajay Singh, I never gave you leave to meet my daughter in secret.

AJAY. Queen mother, you must grant me forgiveness.

MANASI. Why do you ask her forgiveness?

RANI. Manasi, you must not forget that you are a princess. Go, girl,—not a word.

Manasi goes without a word.

Ajay, you are Govind Singh's son and we look upon you as one of our own family. But you must always remember

ACT II—SCENE II

that Manasi is no more a child than you are a boy ; please bear this in mind if you come to see her in future. I feel that it will be better for you to keep away from her after this.

AJAY. Whatever you command.

(Ajay salutes her and goes out.)

RANI. I spoke at the right moment. Of course, it would have been so nice if Manasi could have married him. Now couldn't we just—No, no ! that can never be. No, it must not be thought of, and so there's an end to it.

Enter Rana Amar Singh.

RANA. Rani !

RANI. Curiously enough, I was longing to see you this very moment.

RANA. Have you by any chance spoken harshly to Manasi ?

RANI. Spoken harshly to Manasi ? When ? Not that I know of.

RANA. She is crying.

RANI. Crying ?

RANA. Go . . . go and find out why she is crying.

RANI. What a wayward girl she is ! I never said a word to make her cry . . . You neglect your daughter very badly. You don't seem to know what is going on in the house. You don't care to know what is happening to the princess. Well, if you want to know the truth, she and Ajay Singh, just this very moment, were . . .

RANA. Hush Rani, please remember that you have to be very careful when you tell me anything about Manasi. Do you know who she is ?

RANI. Who is she ?

RANA. I could not tell you. At times I think I scarcely know her—she seems to me such an ethereal creature. I can't understand where she can have been before she chose to visit this planet of ours.

RANI. The father is as impossible as the daughter. Listen—

RANA. No, it is you who must listen, for I want you to promise me that you will never scold Manasi again. Remember that she is a ray of celestial light come down to us in a human form to show us what light is. If you offend this radiance it will return to its home leaving our house a legacy of darkness.

The Rani throws up her hands in a gesture of despair, and goes. The Rana sits down on a dais and gazes silently at the sky.

RANA. This life of ours is only a dream. Yonder sky . . . How blue it is. How blue and clear and deep. White clouds float beneath . . . slowly they pass . . . lazy and gentle and slow.

All nature is heaving gently, like a peaceful ocean of life. And yet at times this lazy glory can be roused to tremendous violence. Clouds thunder in the sky, the tempest gathers and breaks, and rushes across from end to end of the universe. Then, afterwards, a great silence is born.

Enter Govind Singh.

Well Govind Singh, you have come very suddenly and at an unexpected hour!

GOVIND. Rana, fresh Moghul forces are marching once again to besiege Mevar.

RANA. I knew that it would be so, Govind Singh, and this time will not be the last. The Moghuls will not rest until they have laid waste the whole of Rajputana.

GOVIND. Rana, may I be allowed to ask why we on our side have made no preparations for war?

RANA. To war with the inevitable?

GOVIND. You do not mean to say that you will allow the Moghuls to march into Mevar and claim it undisputed?

RANA. And why not? Their persistence surely merits the compliment.

GOVIND. Are you speaking in earnest, Rana?

RANA. In dead earnest. I took part in the last war; that war was enough for me.

GOVIND. But Rana, this is beyond all... will you see your country's fall, and lift no finger to save it, make no effort to guard its honour!

RANA. But what do we gain by these efforts? Set our hands to whatever we may, I know that our labours henceforth will be spent in vain; nay rather, we shall bring down ruin—incalculable disaster, upon our heads. Half our Rajput army fell in the last war; where, then, are we to find the men for the next?

As he is speaking, Satyavati enters.

SATYAVATI. In the earth, Maharana! they will come teeming up from earth's bowels at our call.

RANA. You here, Satyavati? Why have you come now?

SATYAVATI. Rana, I have come to rouse you from your lethargy: the enemy is barking at our doors!

RANA. Peasant sister! I have no heart left for war. This time, I shall sign a treaty of peace.

SATYAVATI. Rana, you are talking in your sleep. How can you sign an inglorious treaty, after winning so glorious a victory in the last war?

RANA. (*With a sigh*) You talk of victory Satyavati, do you? Our victory in the last war? Yes, it is true that we

were victorious, but do you know at what cost? At the cost of the precious blood of half our heroes.

SATYAVATI. Rana, that is no cause for grief. The blood of heroes makes the soil of each land fertile. No country can ever be impoverished while heroes pay toll to its liberty and freedom. It is only the country which has no heroes to lose that is truly deserving of pity.

RANA. But unless I am mistaken, this war can scarcely be the last. Fight now, and we shall be engaged in wars following endlessly, one upon the other. Is it not madness, then, to stand with our poor handful of men before the vast indomitable army of an all-conquering foe?

SATYAVATI. The place which God has assigned to such madness lies far beyond the scope of mortal reasoning. The whole world bows in adoration before such madness. Splendour descends from heaven and crowns such madness with a jewelled crown. You have called it madness, but madness is only a word, Maharana. For who in any age achieved anything truly great who was immune to that madness you condemn?

RANA. But death is the inevitable fruit of the seed of such battle.

SATYAVATI. Is it so difficult for Rana Pratap's son to choose between slavery and death? Shall we, in the cowardly fear of death, give away our jewel to the enemy? Shall we in the fear of death so basely betray the truth of our Mother, of Mevar, holy Mother of innumerable heroes, and land of agelong memories? Shall we in the fear of death give her over to the Moghul and live to see her time-honoured virginity brutally outraged at his hand? If the Moghul covets her first, let him walk a blood-red path and stumble over the bodies of the dead to find her, O Rana! You talk of inevitable death, but are we not all fated to die, soon or late? Or does the Rana fondly imagine that he will buy eternal life by selling his honour? Rana, this is no time for dreaming. Awake and play your part—that of a great leader, a Man of destiny.

RANA. (*moved*). You also play a great part, sister! Your words are charged with a fire. . . . a lightning. . . . they wake strange chords. . . . fill one with awe—as of thunder. Who are you? You are no simple peasant woman.

SATYAVATI. Would you then know 'O Rana? I will hide the truth no longer. I will declare myself this day. I am the daughter of Sagar Singh. I am Satyavati.

RANA. You. . . . the daughter of Rana Sagar Singh? What does this mean?

SATYAVATI. I blush with shame to confess it, yet a daughter must ever strive to expiate the sins of her father. Sagar Singh

is even now in the fort of Chittore, plotting against his nephew the Rana Pratap's son. The Moghul has made him their puppet Rana of Mevar. But I have been wandering far and wide, through the length and breadth of our country, rousing the citizens of Mevar against him. I have told them that Sagar Singh is the lowest of all the sons of Mevar, that he has become the bondslave of the Moghuls. And there is not one living soul in all Mevar who has bowed the knee blindly before him or lifted a hand to help him!

RANA. It is well, my sister.

SATYAVATI. Rana, for the sake of holy Mevar, I have renounced palaces, pleasures, father, son... yea, all that was dear to me, and in the disguise of a peasant woman, day after day have I wandered in the shadow of these mountains, singing the glory of our Motherland. And can you now surrender her to the enemy as lightly as a load that is cast away?

Satyavati's eyes fill with tears and her voice is choked with emotion.

RANA. Sister, calm yourself. You are a woman, a princess, and my cousin. Your words have not been spoken in vain. The Rana is ready to give his life for that country which has claimed your own. Govind Singh, prepare for battle. Go, and muster the army.

Scene III.

Syed Abdulla's tent in Mevar. Night. Abdulla, Hussain and Hidayat.

ABDULLA. There are too many mountains in this country.

HIDAYAT. True, Janab.

ABDULLA. From which flank did the Rajputs attack in that battle where you retreated?

HIDAYAT. I never retreated.

ABDULLA. What! Didn't they take you prisoner? And still you persist in telling us that you never retreated! What do you call retreating, then?

HIDAYAT. Took me prisoner? Never believe it. I gave myself up for the most cunning of reasons.

ABDULLA. What were these cunning reasons, pray?

HUSSAIN. Allow me to explain Janab, as I know it all. When the Rajput army appeared on the field, every man in our army drew his sword from the sheath. But for a very clear and definite reason, each one of us laid his sword down beside the

sheath on his own camp-bed. This done, each one of us twirled his moustaches with manly gravity. And then, as food was ready, very naturally we didn't think of going to fight without a good square meal. Having fed, we carefully parted our hair and once again twirled our moustaches to the finest and most soldier-like points. By that time we noticed the Rajput army before our tents. "Come, let us up and at them!" was the cry, where-upon we all thought of going to fight. But, now, you remember that sheath and sword were lying side by side on each bed at the beginning of the story? In our hurry and confusion, mistaking our sheaths for our swords, we snatched them up instead and rushed forth to battle.

ABDULLA. And you all, I suppose, without exception, mistook your sheaths for your swords.

HIDAYAT. It was fate, nothing more nor less than tricky fate, who made great fools of us.

ABDULLA. Yet there was one thing you could have done.

HIDAYAT. What?

ABDULLA. Why, before beginning the fight, you could have enjoyed a comfortable nap with your swords on the one side and your sheaths on the other.

HIDAYAT. Very true, Sir, but don't you see that, just then, the enemy came rushing in and gave us no time?

ABDULLA. Very true. But tell me what happened next. I suppose you begged them to handcuff you if they felt so inclined, but to spare your neck from the noose and the blade?

HIDAYAT. No, it was not exactly as you have said. But I know that I did do something very like it. I don't remember now what I did say to them, exactly.

ABDULLA. Never mind, so long as you didn't say anything so splendid that it might be a real loss to literature. Well, the long and short of it was that you surrendered, wasn't it?

HIDAYAT. It was much as you have guessed, Janab. Only just before I surrendered an old soldier, mistaking me for some body else, fired a shot at me.

ABDULLA. And after that they tell me that the Rana's daughter came and tended you with great devotion?

HUSSAIN. Yes, Janab, And the Rana consequently grew quite concerned for his daughter's susceptible heart, and without further ado set free our Commander. Isn't that so, Hidayat Ali?

HIDAYAT. That is so. Or else I should have taught the Rana a lesson....

ABDULLA. You are a great hero, Hidayat.

HIDAYAT. I am too bashful by nature, Janab, to claim that title. But I will say this for myself that I have spent a fortune learning the art and science of war.

ABDULLA. Oh, how dark these mountains look by night ! This country is nothing but one gloomy mass of frowning mountains.

HIDAYAT. There are two or three rivers also, Sir.

ABDULLA. We shall see them all clearly when day begins to dawn.

The thud of guns is heard in the distance.

ABDULLA. Listen ! What's that ?

HIDAYAT. Hussain....

HUSSAIN. Janab, it sounds as though the Rana is advancing, without waiting for our generals to attack.

ABDULLA. Bid the soldiers prepare for battle.

Scene IV.

The fort of Chittore. Night. Arun is fast asleep in his bed. Another bed lies vacant. Raja Sagar Singh is pacing up and down.

SAGAR. This fort is like a prison to me. These gray grim slabs of stone, those hoary trees which seem to have outlived centuries. Each one of them seems like an unearthly spirit. When the wind blows at night they sway so strangely to and fro, just like spirits. And when the storm lashes them, why, then they are certainly spirits. As darkness gathers in, they grow black and thick, each like a spectre of pitch. Not one star can be seen through their closely woven leaves. But whatever I have lost or gained through coming here, at least I found time to read the Ramayana. And I have been able to hear wonderful tales of by-gone men from the mouths of peasant-bards and peasant-poets. Great heroes have lived in the past ; of that there can be no doubt. But why do I feel this strange oppression weighing upon my heart to-night ? Is it because this fort is so lonely, and the storm is raging outside ? Sentry, ho there, sentry !

Enter a sentry.

Let your watch be keen to-night. See that not the shadow of a shadow gets into the fort. Great ancestor ! What's that noise ?

SENTRY. I can hear nothing, Rana !

SAGAR. Why, there....there....can't you hear ?

SENTRY. O that ? That is only the flutter of the wide black wings of the storm raging outside.

SAGAR. These storms of yours seem wilder to me than those of any other country. Is it very stormy to-night ?

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SENTRY. It is, Rana.

SAGAR. My life is fast ebbing away. Friend, the nights in your country are very strange and black. Do you see how fearfully dark the sky is?

SENTRY. Yes, Rana.

SAGAR. The storm would seem less terrible if the darkness; were not so great. Sentry, watch well, all of you, this night. Keep your lanterns burning bravely. With their little lemon flames they drive away the shadows. O, I cannot sleep in such overpowering darkness. Watch well, all of you, all the night, with naked swords in your hands. Keep alert. Should any intruder appear, thrust your blade straightway into his chest. But for mercy's sake, my good fellow, don't by any mistake thrust your blade into me. Go....Go and keep guard.

(Exit sentry.)

Arun is fast asleep. How soundly he sleeps! If only I could....but no! I cannot hope for sleep to-night. Our ancestors used to dwell in this fort. The very fact that they lived in this whispering gloom is enough to prove that they were brave and fearless men....Ho, there, sentry!

The sentry re-enters.

Are you wide awake, my man? See that you do not fall asleep. You must call out in the darkness, now and then. That will tell me that you are wide-awake....Go....go and keep careful watch. *(The sentry goes out—A pause.)* Arun! Arun!

ARUN. *(Wakes)* Grandfather?

SAGAR. I hope you are alive? Go to sleep....try not to sleep so heavily in this dark night of storm. I am a little nervous.

ARUN. What makes you nervous, grandfather? Try and sleep....Try and sleep. *(Arun turns over and falls asleep again.)*

SAGAR. Try and sleep, he tells me, and then falls into deep sleep once more. What is it to him?....I cannot find....There again! Sentry, I say, sentry! No answer. He has dropped off to sleep....There....there....he is yawning....Sentry! Arun! Arun!

ARUN. What is it, grandfather? Don't you want me to sleep?

SAGAR. Can you hear that sound?

ARUN. It is only the storm, grandfather. *(He drops asleep again.)*

SAGAR. That cannot be the storm. How can it be? Surely a storm never speaks. There, it is speaking. It is saying something....something dreadful....There....Oh....Oh,....

ARUN. What is the matter with you to-night, grandfather?

SAGAR. Arun, there is a spirit outside.

ARUN. What strange ideas you have!

SAGAR. (*Pointing a finger into space, his mouth wide-open in fear*) There....

ARUN. I can see nothing. Grandfather, you are dreaming with your eyes wide open.

SAGAR. I never wanted to come here. They forced me to come. I am no Rana. Amar Singh is the real Rana....Don't kill me! don't kill me!

ARUN. Grandfather....grandfather!

SAGAR. Who are these? The Ranas of the past....Bheem Singh, Pratap Singh, Jaymal....no....no....I'll leave this fort to-morrow and go away. No....No....Don't look at me like that! Don't....Who are you? Don't kill me!

Overwhelmed by his fears, Sagar Singh gives a cry and falls to the ground in a swoon. The sentry runs in.

ARUN. Bring water, Sentry. Grandfather has fainted.

Scene V.

A Royal inner apartment in Udaipur. Noon. Munasi and Kalyani.

MANASI. I have founded a refuge for lepers. They come flocking, poor unhappy creatures—to find a resting place here.

KALYANI. Your life is blessed.

MANASI. Help me in this work, Kalyani. Come and put new strength into my heart.

KALYANI. Does this work make you happy?

MANASI. To make others happy is the surest way to one's own happiness. For when we seek after selfish joys they melt away.

KALYANI. That is what my brother also says. He is your disciple. He is always talking of you.

MANASI. Is he?

KALYANI. He worships you.

MANASI. Why does he never come to see me now? Ask him to come, Kalyani. I have a great....a great desire, I should say, to see him.

Enter a servant.

SERVANT. Princess, a woman has brought some pictures.

MANASI. To sell?

SERVANT. Yes.

MANASI. Bring her in.

(Exit servant.)

What does your brother do all day long?

KALYANI. He is seldom at home. He spends his day nursing the sick and comforting those who are in sorrow.

Enter the picture-vendor.

MANASI. Do you sell pictures?

VENDOR. Yes, mother.

MANASI. I would like to see some.

The vendor opens her bundle and takes out her pictures.

Where do you live?

VENDOR. In Agra.

MANASI. And you have come all this way from your home to sell your pictures?

VENDOR. We wander from place to place.

MANASI. Whose picture is this?

VENDOR. The Emperor Akbar Shah's.

KALYANI. Let me see. O, what a sharp glint his eyes have!

MANASI. Yet in them the quality of tenderness and affection is blended. Whose is this?

VENDOR. The Emperor Jehangir's.

KALYANI. What an imperious countenance!

MANASI. A very determined face. And whose is this?

VENDOR. This is the Moghul general Hidayat Ali Khan. See how handsome he is!

MANASI. (*Bursts into laughter*) Oh....

KALYANI. What makes you laugh so?

MANASI. Oh, what a vacant foolish face. And what a pose! Look at his curly hair so carefully parted down the centre! He is really too effeminate....an empty face....Who is this?

VENDOR. Mohabat Khan.

MANASI. Commander Mohabat Khan? (*She examines the picture carefully*). The face of a real hero! A forehead broad and noble, and piercing eyes. Not often does one see such magnificent determination and spiritual grandeur, such sternness and such kindness, so finely blended in one countenance. Well, Kalyani, you are gazing at it very intently! (*She turns away*.)

KALYANI. No....

MANASI. What pictures are those?

VENDOR. The pictures of nobles and emperors.

MANASI. Let them be. Let me have this one of Akbar, and this of Jehangir, and this, of Mohabat Khan....These few will do for to-day. How much do you ask for them?

VENDOR. Whatever mother is pleased to give.

MANASI. (*Untying the knot of her garment-hem and drawing out four gold coins*). Here, take these.

VENDOR. (*Looking at the coins*) Is this the likeness of the Rana Amar Singh?

MANASI. Yes.

VENDOR. Won't you give me a portrait of yourself, good mother?

MANASI. I have none.

VENDOR. Has nobody ever painted your picture?

MANASI. Never.

VENDOR. Then will you not allow me to do so now?

MANASI. My portrait? Why do you want it?

VENDOR. Because I have never seen such a tender face, so full of delicate compassion. I should like to preserve your likeness in a portrait. I cannot draw well....yet something tells me that if I drew your face, I should not fail.

MANASI. No....You must pardon me if I do not permit you.

VENDOR. Why, princess, what is your objection?

MANASI. I have no objection. I think you had better go now.

VENDOR. Well then, I will come again, princess.

MANASI.—Do. (*The vendor goes out*) Shall I single out the picture you want to see? (*She picks up one of the pictures*). Keep it. Why are you so shy? After all, it is your husband's portrait.

KALYANI. (*With bowed head*) But he has proved a traitor to his religion.

MANASI. Why do you talk like that? Religion? Kalyani! Even as all human beings are the children of one God, so also are all religions the children of one religion. Then why should there be these quarrels between brother and brother? I cannot understand. More blood has been shed in the name of religion than in the name of anything else in the world.

KALYANI. Is not my love a sin?

MANASI. How can love be a sin? When love is spurned, it holds up a cup of tenderness to those who spurn it. The whole world is flooded with its immortal light. There is not a heart in the world which can hide from love. As for Mohabat Khan, Kalyani, he is certainly not an unbeliever. He may not be a Hindu, but he is a Moslem. How can the Creator of All be concerned to know whether He is worshipped under the name of Brahma or Allah? Does man become a sinner because he calls a thing by one of its two names?

KALYANI. Henceforth you shall be my teacher. Speak, and I will listen at your feet.

MANASI. In the kingdom of love there are no castes, no warring religions. There is not the shadow of anything earthly in that kingdom. Love's magic mansion is built in the rose-red light of the morning sky. Love knows no chains nor limitations. It is a flame which casts no shadow. Like the star it remains

unchanged beyond a changing world of angry thunders and fickle storms. Why do you gaze at me so, Kalyani? || ॥ ॥

KALYANI. Princess, your soul is music. May I come to see you again to-morrow? —But I must leave you now. (Exit)

Kalyani goes out. Manasi sings.

The heavens descend on alien earth
And the earth soars into the heavens on high :
All all translate thy deep commands,
Life is thy soul's epiphany.

MANASI. My marriage?

RANI. Your marriage with Yasvant Singh, the Maharaja of Jodhpur, has long been settled. An envoy is about to be despatched to the Maharaja to arrange a day for the celebrations.

(Manasi bursts into tears.)

RANI. Why are you crying? What makes you cry?

MANASI. I will not cry any more. Mother, I will not be married.

RANI. What is that you are saying?

MANASI. I shall not imprison my life within the narrow circle of marriage. The circle of my love is far wider than that.

RANI. How can a princess like you remain unmarried?

MANASI. And why not? There are many child widows who live in sweet widowhood, and surely I may remain a maiden if I wish! I will go and tell my father that I have decided to remain unmarried all my life.

(She goes in.)

RANI. What a forward girl! I wonder if she is going mad? It would hardly be surprising. The Rana neglects her and she always has her own way. What I feared has come to pass. But here comes the Rana. I shall speak to him firmly.

Enter the Rana.

RANA. Rani, where is Manasi?

RANI. She has just gone to look for you. Rana, the girl is going mad.

RANA. Going mad?

RANI. Without any doubt. She refuses to be married. She says she has decided to take the vow of celibacy.

RANA. I see.... It grows clearer and clearer every day.

RANI. I have so often told you not to neglect her, but you never listen, and now she has turned quite mad.

RANA. Had you been capable of such madness, Rani, I would have set you up on a throne of gold and brought to your feet a daily offering of flowers.

RANI. Preposterous! *(Aside)* Really, there's not much to choose between the pair of them.

RANA. Rani, I understand very well what has happened to the princess. A Heavenly light has come down upon her, and entered into her body and soul....

RANI. If this is the truth of the matter....

RANA. Say not another word, Rani. Henceforth you must merely be a silent witness, and wait and see.

(He goes out.)

RANI. It is all over. The girl has inherited her madness from her father's side. And the future stares very blankly at me.

Scene VI.

Interior of Govind Singh's house. Noon. A picture hangs on the wall. Before it stands Kalyani, with a bunch of flowers in her hand.

KALYANI. My love, Lord of my life! You are the golden dream of my waking hours, you have coloured my world in new colours. You are the morning sun, you have entered the lampless cavern of my heart with footfalls of gold. As the one king of my heart you have come and claimed the throne within. You have taught my life's despair to lift up its head. O my god, my salvation, the owner of all I own—

She offers the flowers to the picture. Govind Singh enters the apartment and stands watching her.

GOVIND. *(After a silence, in a deep voice)* Kalyani!

KALYANI. Father.

GOVIND. Whose picture is this?

KALYANI. My husband's.

GOVIND. Your husband's? Do you mean Mohabat Khan's?

KALYANI. Yes, father.

GOVIND. How comes this picture here?

KALYANI. I have hung it here to-day so that I might make my offerings.

GOVIND. Offerings to that picture?

KALYANI. Yes, father, are you surprised? Is it a crime? Do not be angry, father, pray.

GOVIND. What is Mohabat Khan to you?

KALYANI. Mohabat Khan is my husband.

GOVIND. Have I not told you again and again that you have no husband?

KALYANI. So I used to think. But now I understand that I have a husband.

GOVIND. What? Mohabat Khan your husband? The enemy of our religion?

KALYANI. Father, I know no religion. I was married to Mohabat Khan. God was our witness and we became one. Who has power to break bonds that have bound us together?

GOVIND. Mohabat Khan himself broke those bonds when he became a Moslem.

KALYANI. Yet he wished to accept me as his wife even after his conversion.

GOVIND. Accept you? What right has Mohabat Khan, now that he is a Moslem, either to accept or not accept Govind Singh's daughter? The day Mohabat Khan renounced Hinduism and turned Moslem, that day he renounced you.

KALYANI. He never renounced me.

GOVIND. What? Is the cup of insult not full for you yet? Then listen....Have you written any letter to Mohabat Khan of late?

KALYANI. I have.

Enter Ajay Singh

GOVIND. Alas, sad fate! (*He strikes his forehead with his palm.*) He has returned that letter unopened with these few words upon it: "Kalyani, I cannot accept you." Take this letter, and see for yourself! (*He flings it at her. Kalyani, picks up the letter and examines it slowly.*)

GOVIND. Well, Ajay! have you found whether the report is true?

AJAY. Yes, father, the report is true. The Moghul army has set out on its march.

GOVIND. Who is in command of the army this time?

AJAY. Shahzada Parvez.

GOVIND. What is the strength of the army?

AJAY. About twenty thousand men.

GOVIND. That means that all is lost. The heart of Mevar was already beating feebly, and now there will be an end. — How now, Kalyani, you seem to be downcast!

KALYANI. What have I to say, father?

GOVIND. Is Mohabat Khan still your husband?

KALYANI. A hundred times yes. Every wife worships the husband who loves her. The true wife is she who can worship the very feet that have spurned her....she whose love knows no change even when he is fickle. Mohabat Khan is my master and my lord. Whether he gives me a place at his feet or none, it is the same. For I feel that it is not for the wife to sit in judgment over her husband—her one duty is to be constant as the lodestar.

GOVIND. (*Sternly*) Are you not my daughter?

KALYANI. Yes, father, I am your daughter and I will protect your honour. But even as you have dedicated your life to your country, I have dedicated mine to my husband. Who can hold me back?

(*Kalyani's voice trembles.*)

GOVIND. Dedication? Daughter! is this what you call dedication? I would call it—

AJAY. Father, I beseech you, think before you speak. Hasty words escape from our lips in the sudden access of anger. Do not forget yourself and speak so contemptuously of that which is so beautiful, so great and so pure.

KALYANI. (*Proudly*) You are indeed my brother, Ajay.

GOVIND. Have I not told you a thousand times that Kalyani has no husband, that she is a widow?

KALYANI. And I, father, am ready to tell you as many times more that in life and in death Mohabat Khan is my husband.

GOVIND. This Mohabat Khan, this vile turn-coat, this abominable renegade your husband? This—

KALYANI. Father, don't forget that while you disdain him, I worship him.

GOVIND. Worship him? Govind Singh's daughter worships this traitor to his faith, this Mohabat Khan? Alas, sad destiny!

KALYANI. (*Calmly*) Father, I understand neither parents, caste nor creed. They mean nothing to me. When a woman has once made her plunge—be it into a pool of poison or into a sea of milk—there and there alone her life must lie, both now and hereafter. Mohabat Khan may be a Hindu, a Moslem, or an atheist even. I only know that we are two travellers on a single path. If I had to go to the ends of the earth for his sake I should do so.

GOVIND. Then go. I disown you.

AJAY. Father, what are you saying, what are you doing? Kalyani is your daughter.

GOVIND. She is my daughter no longer. Go, Kalyani, go to your god, your husband.

KALYANI. A father's command is law. Bid me farewell, father. (*She makes obeisance to him.*)

AJAY. Father, reflect one moment. You must not be so unjust. Kalyani, after all, is a woman. Even if she is guilty, you must forgive her.

GOVIND. She wants to go—where, I do not know. Let her. I shall not stand in her way.

AJAY. Wherever she may go, the white and holy light of love will shine upon her. Father, do not cast away this jewel. You do not know what you are doing.

GOVIND. I know my mind, Ajay. Kalyani, he who is at heart an enemy of my country has no place in my house. If your husband be your religion....my country is mine. (*He turns to go.*)

KALYANI. My father's commands shall be obeyed. (*She makes her obeisance.*)

AJAY. Stay a moment, Kalyani. Father....I must ask you to bid me farewell too.

GOVIND. Why, Ajay?

AJAY. I cannot allow Kalyani to go unprotected and alone. I must go with her.

GOVIND. I have not asked you to go.

AJAY. Nor do I wait for you to do so. Kalyani is a woman. You are driving her forth from this house forever into a harsh and cruel world. Had her husband been here, he would surely have given her his protection. Her husband is not here, but

her brother is. He will be her sanctuary in this dark hour. Come, Kalyani....To-day, brother and sister, we shall launch our boat out into the blind ocean that is called the world. Let us see what shore lies beyond. Father, we salute you.

(*Exeunt Ajay and Kalyani.*)

Govind Singh stands dumb with sorrow.

Scene VII.

A Wild heath near Chittore. Evening.

Sagar Singh and Arun Singh are standing at the foot of a tree. The afterglow lights up the horizon from behind a distant mountain.

SAGAR. I have not the least desire to remain in this kingdom any longer. The Fort of Chittore is nothing but a prison, old and damp and dark. And around it there is nothing to see but mountains and trees. There is never a soul within sight. And look at the trees! See how hoary they are. Let us return to Agra, Arun.

ARUN. I like this place very much. Every mountain here is full of ancestral memories. Grandfather, don't you like to listen to stories of bygone glories?

SAGAR. Well I never! He is talking of bygone glories again! Young pumpkin! Let the dead bury their dead. In the name of the bygone men, don't cram your little head with tales of past glories! It may burst.

ARUN. It will not, grandfather! The stories of old times are far more wonderful than stories of to-day. To-day seems much too near and pointless. But round the past there is a soft halo which makes it so wonderful! The past is like the sleepy blue which is filling the sky now; it is like—yes, it is like a dream.

SAGAR. (*Aside*) Just what I feared! The older he grows, the clearer it becomes that he is going to take after his mother—Little man, indulge in day-dreams at your peril. That's what your mother did, until at last she left the house, and went away, nobody knows where.

ARUN. Used my mother to talk like this?

SAGAR. Yes, my little old man! and that was her undoing. She went off her head through talking too much about Mevar.

ARUN. I will go and seek her and find her.

SAGAR. In this thick forest? No, my 'boy! Why, you couldn't find the sun itself, if it was hiding in this forest.

ARUN. Grandfather, I must go! I have made up my mind not to return to Agra any more. You may say what you like,

but I love this place. So long as my mother is here, it is my home. All the time that I was in Agra I felt homeless, even though I lived in a house.

SAGAR. There now! Just what I was afraid of! Young man, I suppose you have never seen the Emperor's new palace of white stone at Agra.

ARUN. No, and I don't want to see it. This dreary forest haunts me: palaces pall.

SAGAR. There are seventy-eight gorgeous mosques in Agra, all newly built and O, you should see them glimmer....how they glimmer! O....

ARUN. To me one broken temple in my own country is dearer than a hundred mosques carved out of solid gold. A meal of potherbs eaten on my mother's lap would be sweeter to me than a royal feast at the feet of the Moghuls. Grandfather! you have left your country, your brother, your house and all its memories, simply to go and beg for alms at the door of strangers. Even though they filled your out-stretched hands with heaps of gold, remember their gold is never free from the dust of their proud feet. I have watched them laughing at you and have seen a snarl of scorn peeping out through their laughter. Grandfather, believe me, the simple smile of a brother is richer than a treasure-house choked full with gold received as a gift from the hands of foreigners.

Satyavati suddenly enters.

SATYAVATI. Heaven bless you, my son! Your words are indeed the words of a true Rajput hero.

SAGAR. Who are you? Is it Satyavati? Or is this a dream? You here, little mother? Is it possible?

SATYAVATI. Oh how hard it was for me, my son, to tear myself away from the tender bonds of your little hands which clutched at me, on that memorable day when I put on a beggar's garb and renounced the world and you! All through my wanderings over this mountainous country, while I sang the praises of Mevar, I found it hardest of all to wean my heart from the memory of your lisping laughter. When I heard that you were here, I could control myself no longer. I came running to see you, my son. For days past, I could only hear the echoes of your young voice sounding beyond the fort. And I often wondered if it was the singing of a cherub.....I marvelled that such sweetness could be found in this harsh world! And now I know that the voice is yours, my son, my jewel, my all-in-all!

She stretches out her hands, and Arun runs to embrace her.

ARUN. Mother, mother dear!

SAGAR. Satyavati...little mother! How is it that you have no eyes for me? What sin have I committed?

SATYAVATI. What sin? You do not know? You deserted your motherland, most precious of all jewels, and ran to the Moghul to gather crumbs at his feet. You became a bonds slave to him...to him who has dared to come and tear our country ruthlessly away from us...to him who has destroyed our temples, polluted our shrines, soiled the purity of our sisters, and crushed the manhood of our brothers! Again and again he has come, the Moghul, swollen with haughty pride, to invade our beloved Mevar, the one free kingdom that we have left. He has drenched the bosom of the Mother with the blood of her own children. And you, you have striven, in a slave-like emulation, to rob your brother's son, the son of Pratap Singh, of his throne. Yet you ask what sin you have committed! But little, father, does it matter now. You have chosen your path, and we have chosen ours. Come, my son, you are the only fellow traveller left to me in this dark wilderness. You have put strength into my heart. Come, my son. (*She turns to depart with her son.*)

SAGAR. Wait, wait, wait a little, don't leave me and go! Your words have opened my eyes at last. The sacred Motherland stands revealed to me in awful purity. I will return to the Motherland and uphold her in poverty and in affliction. Come, little mother, come! my trembling arms yearn for your forgiving embrace.

SATYAVATI. Have I indeed found both son and father in one and the same moment? Is it possible? Can this be?

SAGAR. I was blind. How little could I see! O, pardon me my great blindness!

SATYAVATI. (*Falling at her father's feet*) Father! Father!

ACT III

Scene I.

The Assembly Hall in Udaipur. Morning.

JAYA SINGH. The story of this great battle must be worthily recorded. Let it be engraved in letters of gold.

GOKUL SINGH. Our general has done well.

BHUPATI. It seems that the enemy was unaware of the mountain path, and was taken by surprise from the rear.

GOKUL. Yet he found the road of escape.

JAYA SINGH. To-day a dawn of Triumph irradiates the sky of Mevar. See in what fresh and glorious colours it bathes our noble mountains!

BHUPATI. May this gentle breeze which blows proclaim the news of our victory throughout the length and breadth of Hindustan.

Enter Rana Amar Singh.

ALL. Victory to the Rana Amar Singh! Victory!

The Rana takes his seat on the throne. Kishore Das, the court poet, sings the song of victory.

O King of kings, who rulest earth
with a power that daily legends makes,
Great men and Titans, even the Gods
for fear before thy prowess quakes.
All thrill to hymn thy glory's wonder
And clouds beat time with drums of thunder,

The Vast upon sky's censor lights
sun, moon and star-lamps for thee, Lord,
And even mountains tremble when thou
wieldst in wrath thy lightning-sword.

RANA. Kishore Das, add one more line to your song:

'Though for thy crimes shall perish all this
rich vain-glory the wise deplored.'

JAYA SINGH. Why on earth do you strike such a mournful note in this great hour of jubilation, Rana?

RANA. (*Smiling sadly*) Time will provide the answer.

Enter Satyavati.

SATYAVATI. All victory to the Rana of Mevar!

RANA. (*Rising*) O come my sister, come. I bid you welcome in the name of all.

SATYAVATI. (*Moved*) Maharana, long have I been standing outside this august assembly hall. Tears filled my eyes as I listened to the song of victory as though under a spell of enchantment. And I pictured to myself the mighty procession headed by the Maharana's godlike ancestor Shree Ramchandra when he returned to his native city after his conquest of Lanka. I thrilled to this wonderful vision when the song ended, and it was as though some goddess had come glancing down to bear away that song to heaven. I awoke as though from a trance.

RANA. But every song has an end, dear sister. All song rises on the wave of a brief rapture, then breaks on the crest of vanity and finally disappears into the trough of a sigh.

SATYAVATI. Your words sound strange Rana, in the context of Mevar's jubilation. What is it that makes your heart so heavy, your face so sad? Shake off this tearful tone, we beseech you in this auspicious day of victory.

RANA. (*Melancholy*) An auspicious day? But for whom, Satyavati? Not for us who have not won the battle.

SATYAVATI. Who won it then? The Moghuls?

RANA. No. the Rajputs have won it. But we who have returned have not won it. Those who were victorious are all lying on the battlefield, cold and silent, under the bare and vacant dome of the sky. We who returned with flaunting banners and drum-beats of victory, are not the victors. Those who never return, the silent dead, who never make vaunts, —they are the only true victors!

SATYAVATI. That is true, Rana. May their glory never fade. But I have other news to bring you, Rana.

RANA. What is your news, Satyavati?

SATYAVATI. My father, Rana Sagar Singh, has left the fort of Chittore and makes it over to your hand. Hasten now, Rana, and claim it unchallenged.

RANA. The fort of Chittore? What can this mean? It cannot be true.

SATYAVATI. It is indeed true.

RANA. The news is all too sudden. Why has he done this? Was it at the Emperor's bidding?

SATYAVATI. He has not waited for the Emperor's orders. The Emperor entrusted the fort to him; has he not the right to make it over as a gift to whomsoever he likes? He has repented of his former life. The fort is yours.

RANA. Chiefs! Sound the clarion note of victory. The dream of my father's life has found a strange fulfilment to-day. Muster the army; go, and seize the fort. Advance, and fight till it is won!

SATYAVATI. Victory to the Rana of Mevar!

CHIEFS. Victory to Rana Amar Singh!

Scene II.

A broken-down hut by the wayside, near a village. Nightfall. Kalyani and Ajay Singh.

KALYANI. Brother, I can walk no further.

AJAY. Courage! yonder lies a village, and see! here is a half-ruined hut. It has no door. There is no light inside.

KALYANI. Call aloud. Let us see if there is anyone living here.

AJAY. Is anybody there? Is there anyone within? No answer. The hut must be deserted.

KALYANI. Let us spend the night here. I cannot go another step.

AJAY. We shall. Wait here, while I go to the village and bring lights.

KALYANI. Do....My feet are so heavy with walking. I am very hungry, Ajay.

AJAY. I will try to bring back food with me. Wait here.

KALYANI. Come back soon, brother. I am afraid to be alone.

AJAY. Afraid....What is there to fear? I will come back as quickly as I can. There is no one here to harm you. Fear nothing. (*Ajay sets off towards the village.*)

KALYANI. I have never walked on any road before; that is why my feet are bruised and bleeding. But there is joy for me in this pain. These sufferings fill me with immeasurable pride. Joy wells up within me. I am faring towards my husband, as the high and unfettered waves make towards the land....but alas! I do not know whether he will accept me even as his slave. Who is there?

Enter Sagar Singh in the garb of a fakir.

SAGAR. I am a Rajput. Fear not, mother. I can see that you are a high-born Rajput lady. How comes it that you are all alone in this deserted place?

KALYANI. My brother has left me here and gone to the neighbouring village in search of food.

SAGAR. It is well. With your leave, I will stay with you until he returns. This place is the haunt of a band of lawless Moslems. But a few moments past I saw four or five men being molested by them. I will protect you, mother, while your brother is away.

KALYANI. Pray do protect me. I begin to feel afraid.

Voices in the distance: "Who is in that hut?" "Yes, that's the very spot"....

KALYANI. Somebody is coming this way. Brother, brother!

Enter thieves.

1ST THIEF. Here you are, here you are.

2ND THIEF. Catch hold of them.

(A thief makes towards Kalyani)

KALYANI. Save me, save me!

SAGAR. *(Rushing to the rescue with sword waving in air)*
Beware!

1ST THIEF. Who is this?

2ND THIEF. What do we care? Down with him, down with him!

Sagar Singh fights with them and falls wounded to the ground.

KALYANI. Brother, brother! where are you?

Ajay rushes in, sword in hand.

AJAY. Courage, Kalyani. I am here!

Ajay fights with the thieves. Two of them fall and the others take to their heels.

I have routed them all. *(To Sagar)* Who are you?

KALYANI. He was wounded in trying to save me.

SAGAR. Who are you both?

AJAY. I am Ajay Singh, the son of Govind Singh, and this lady here is my sister.

SAGAR. What do you mean? Is she Mohabat Khan's wife?

AJAY. Yes, noble sir. And who are you, may I know?

SAGAR. I am Mohabat Khan's father.

Scene III.

An apartment in Govind Singh's house at Jodhpur. Morning. Gaja Singh, ruler of Jodhpur, Haridas, a courtier, Gaja Singh's son Amar Singh and Arun Singh in an envoy's garb.

GAJA. Envoy! tell the Maharana that I regret I cannot persuade myself to approve of this alliance. I do not care to be joined with one who has rebelled against the Emperor. What does Haridas say?

HARIDAS. Most assuredly not.

ARUN. What do you mean by rebellion, Maharaj? Mevar has never yet been conquered. Surely you cannot call us a rebellious people because we stand up like men and fight for the freedom of Mevar?

GAJA. What else can it be but revolt? The whole of Rajputana has bent its head low in recognition of the Moghul's rule. There is only this one little haughty province of Mevar which carries its head so insolently high.

ACT III—SCENE III

ARUN. I understand. The Maharaj is jealous. The Maharaj cannot bear to think that every mountain in Rajputana has lost its glory save only Mevar, whose crest still glows with all her ancient splendour. He cannot bear to see the head of every other Rajput king widowed of that crown which flashes still on our Rana's head. But Maharaj, can you blame our Rana for this? He never despoiled you of your royal splendour. You yourself have lost it.

GAJA. Envoy! you are bold! No one has ever dared to talk so insolently before the Maharaja Gaja Singh. If the Rana is so vainglorious, so intoxicated with self-conceit as to think that he will be able to combat the Emperor with his five thousand men. . . . that is no affair of mine. Such madness suits him well.

ARUN. It is well spoken, Maharaj. Such madness suits him very well. Alas that it should lie so far beyond your reach!

GAJA. You are an envoy and as such you cannot be put to death—or else. . . .

ARUN. The noble restraint of the Maharaja's words is indeed a matter for surprise.

GAJA. Envoy! there is a limit to my patience. Return to your Rana and tell him that I will not accept such an alliance. Go.

ARUN. I go. But not till I have said one thing more. Maharaj, I hear that you have fought again and again for the Moghuls in their wars in the Deccan, and that you have won Gujarat for them. It is possible that you might join them in their next invasion of Mevar. Lest you have not thought of it, I invite you now. (*He turns to go.*)

GAJA. Good, I accept the invitation. Stop, envoy. You shall go with us too.

ARUN. What! are you going to make me your prisoner?

GAJA. I am. Amar, seize him.

AMAR. What are you saying, father? He is an envoy and it is against the laws of our chivalry to offer him violence.

GAJA. I am not here to take lessons in chivalry from you. Obey my commands.

AMAR. I cannot obey such an unjust command.

GAJA. You cannot! Insolent boy! Listen. You are my eldest son. But if you disobey me, then you shall not inherit this kingdom. It will pass into the hands of my youngest son.

AMAR. Your kingdom? I have never yearned to sit on a throne and eat out of the Moghul's charitable hand!

GAJA. Good. Henceforth you are an exile from this kingdom. Go.

AMAR. This very moment.

GAJA. Envoy, begone. I shall not make you a prisoner.

Scene IV.

Mohabat Khan's apartment. Night. Mohabat Khan alone.

MOHABAT. It is true that I abandoned her, but, I can never banish her from my memory. Even to this day her tender love, her young and radiant face dwell in my inmost heart. Now only do I know how priceless a jewel I have lost. Why did I return her letter so cruelly? Her love was pure, warm-hearted, unselfish, and I have requited it with coldness, denial, unmanly rebuffs. Because her father repelled me, I spurned her eager affection. And now I begin to see how hateful my ingratitude has been. If only I could find the way to implore her pardon, I would seek it this moment like a beggar with folded hands.

Enter Door-keeper.

DOOR-KEEPER. Maharaj Gaja Singh desires an interview with my noble master.

MOHABAT. Gaja Singh! The Raja of Jodhpur?

DOOR-KEEPER. The same.

MOHABAT. Let him enter.

(Exit the door-keeper.)

MOHABAT. Maharaj Gaja Singh in my kingdom? That intolerable sycophant who sings the Moghul's praises!—But here he comes.

Enter Gaja Singh.

GAJA. My respectful salutations to you.

MOHABAT. Welcome, Maharaj Gaja Singh. What brings you to this humble dwelling? What news?

GAJA. The Emperor has sent for you.

MOHABAT. The Emperor is very gracious. I suppose he wishes me to embark on another campaign against Mevar?

GAJA. I suppose so, Khan Saheb.

MOHABAT. I have already informed him that I am little disposed for this. Yet he insists on summoning me again and again.

GAJA. The successive defeats of the Moghul forces have left the Emperor sore at heart. He has now decided to entreat you to help in the next attack. He is firmly persuaded that you alone can retrieve the honour of the Moghuls. You are his favourite, most dearly loved general.

MOHABAT. Who told you this?

GAJA. It is an open secret.

MOHABAT. I see. *(He walks up and down the room.)*

GAJA. Come, Saheb. You must decide to take up arms at last. I know that Mevar is the land of your birth. It is well-

known also that you are Rana Amar Singhs' cousin. But it is also common knowledge that you have exiled all sentiment for Mevar from your heart. You have renounced its religion of your own accord. You broke the last tie with your country when you accepted the Moslem faith. Why should you hesitate?

MOHABAT. If only Mevar had not been the land which gave me birth....

GAJA. Do you think that your Motherland will ever take you back to her bosom? Return to her and see. Go as a friend if you like; your welcome will not be different for that. All Mevar will point the finger of scorn at you and cry: Behold him....Pratap Singh's nephew....a traitor to his own religion....an infidel Moslem. Old men will turn their faces away in utter scorn. The young will glare at you with eyes on fire with anger. The women of Mevar will peep out at you from behind their little secret windows, and call down curses on your head. Entertain no false hope, Khan Saheb, for the Rajputs will never reclaim you or give you a place in the circle of their proud brotherhood.

MOHABAT. Perhaps they will not. (*He reflects*).

GAJA. You have cast in your lot with the Moghuls. It is done now and cannot be undone. Their downfall is your downfall. Reflect on what I say, Khan Saheb.

Exit Gaja Singh. Enter Sagar Singh in the garb of a fakir.

SAGAR. Mohabat!

MOHABAT. What is this, father? You here? And in this garb?

SAGAR. I have renounced the world, Mohabat.

MOHABAT. You amaze me, father!

SAGAR. Yes, Mohabat, I suppose you may well be surprised. That I who renounced my country, my kinsmen and my caste, who went and begged for charitable crumbs at the foreigner's door, should—but the evening of my life has come, and with it, my homecoming. Yes, you may well be surprised. Do you know what has brought me back, Mohabat Khan?

MOHABAT. No, father.

SAGAR. Only this, that after so many years of wandering, I have heard the sweet voice of the Motherland, calling to me once more. How deep her voice is when she calls! Mohabat, you cannot imagine what deep and vibrant tones are in that voice. And now all that is left for me is to try and expiate my past sins and so I have come to persuade you to expiate yours.

MOHABAT. My sins?

SAGAR. Yes, your sins. When I became the slave of the Moghuls I only renounced my beloved countrymen, But you took one step farther and renounced your religion too. You have sinned most grievously.

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SAGAR. Yes, your sins. When I became the slave of the Moghuls I only renounced my beloved countrymen, But you took one step farther and renounced your religion too. You have sinned most grievously.

MOHABAT. Father, I cannot see how I have sinned. If I am convinced at heart that Islam is the true faith.....

SAGAR. Convinced at heart! Mohabat Khan! may I ask you how you came by this conviction? My son, you have read the Koran, as every Moslem should. Islam is beyond all doubt a great religion. Hinduism is not jealous of it. Hinduism has no quarrel with Islam, nor indeed with any other faith. But I ask you if you have ever thought seriously about the religion of your forefathers, before you accepted the faith of the foreigner? Answer me, how could you have weighed these two religions in your mind, you who have been unlettered and ignorant all your life? You renounced that faith based on the belief in the dominion of the Spirit...the faith which teaches that divine love dwells in all things, the faith which does not sanction the killing of so much as the tiniest insect! This was the faith you shunned and renounced without a moment's thought. And yet you dare to brag that you have not erred nor sinned!

MOHABAT. Father, I am speechless with amazement. To think that you of all living beings should come—

SAGAR. To expound religion to you? It is not surprising that you are surprised. I marvel myself when I think of the change that has taken place in such a heretic as I. To think that one who cared for nothing save wealth and luxury all these long years, should now renounce the world! It is astonishing, indeed, I grant. But Mohabat, where is the heart in the world which has not one chord at least attuned to the heavenly harmony? Long, long it waits, till at last the touch of an unseen hand makes it vibrate, when it rises above its preoccupation with self, and wings in delight in the light and air of heaven. This is what Kalyani has taught me, Mohabat!

MOHABAT. Kalyani!

SAGAR. Yes, she...her voice still echoes in my ears like the memory of a divine melody. Do you know, Mohabat, that Kalyani's father has driven her forth from hearth and home?

MOHABAT. Kalyani an outcaste! What can she have done to deserve such a fate?

SAGAR. She persisted in worshipping you. Her father caught her offering flowers to your picture.

MOHABAT. (*Eagerly*) Where have you seen her?

SAGAR. In a ruined cabin by the wayside.

MOHABAT. So this is the great and noble religion that you so loudly praise, father! —A religion that teaches such hatred and contempt of all Moslems? A religion which rewards a wife's beautiful loyalty and devotion by thrusting her forth from under the roof which shelters her head! (*Suddenly*) Father, you have asked me to expiate my sins, have you not? It is well.

I shall make atonement now. But mark me in this : it will be not for my conversion to Islam, but because I was once a Hindu.

SAGAR. Mohabat !

MOHABAT. Father ! From this day forth I wipe out the last touch of kindly feeling for Hinduism which was left in my heart. Henceforward, I am in every pore, in every nerve, a Moslem. I will be Moslem to the very core.

SAGAR. Mohabat, I beg of you—

MOHABAT. Father, you know me too well. I am a man of few words. When I have made a vow, I stand by it at my peril.

SAGAR. Mohabat ! Listen—

MOHABAT. Father, not another word.

(He strides out.)

SAGAR. Have you really fallen so low as this, Mohabat ? Then die ! Perish in your blindness, lost infidel and traitor !

(Sagar goes out.)

Mohabat Khan returns and paces up and down in agitation.

MOHABAT. Such intolerance, such rancour ! Even a wife's —*(gnashing his teeth)* Little wonder that the Moslems pay back this enmity and hatred at interest. This, then, is what they mean by Hinduism. A fine mushroom of a religion, indeed ! Whatever charge might be laid at the door of Islam, at least it may boast of ready hospitality to one and all who knock at the door. But these arrogant Hindus—why, they will not welcome one soul back into their fold—not if he did penance for a hundred years. Such pride, such arrogance ! If I could only crush the life out of them !

Re-enter Gaja Singh.

Maharaj, give my respects to the Emperor and tell him I am prepared to fight in the next campaign. Does this surprise you, Maharaj ? Do you know why I have so suddenly made up my mind ?

GAJA. No doubt for the very good reason that you are the Emperor's favourite general.

MOHABAT. You are wrong. I go to annihilate the Hindus. I go to cast the whole Rajput tribe into the flaming pit. I go to wipe their very name out of the future history of Hinduism. Go, tell this to the Emperor.

Scene V.

The Assembly Hall of Jehangir, Emperor of Hindustan.. Morning. Jehangir surrounded by his courtiers.

JEHANGIR. Even death will not wipe away this insult Parvez is no general. How did he lose ?

HIDAYAT. I can swear to it that he had not the least desire to lose.

JEHANGIR. Hidayat, you are less than worthless.

HIDAYAT. The Emperor is never mistaken.

JEHANGIR. Hidayat, you lost this war and were taken prisoner and ended by going on your knees to the Rana and buying your freedom. Abdullah at least fell in battle. You could not even do that.

Enter Sagar Singh.

SAGAR. Emperor, you have sent for me?

JEHANGIR. Yes. I desired to speak to you. Listen. I placed you in charge of the fort of Chittore, proclaiming you the Rana. Now I hear that you have returned after handing over that fort to Rana Amar Singh as a gift. Is this true?

SAGAR. It is, Emperor.

JEHANGIR. (*Indignant*) Who gave you the permission, pray?

SAGAR. I did not wait for any, Emperor.

JEHANGIR. (*Trembling with rage*) You did not wait for any! you dared....

SAGAR. I knew that Chittore was Rana Amar Singh's by right.

JEHANGIR. O you knew it, did you? (*His voice chokes with wrath.*)

SAGAR. Yes. I learned that the Emperor Akbar did not come into possession of Chittore by fair conquest. It was by treacherous means that Jayamal was killed.

JEHANGIR. Since when have you begun to distinguish between fair play and foul?

SAGAR. Ever since the new Light broke in upon my sight.

JEHANGIR. Traitor! So you have seen a new Light, have you?

SAGAR. Yes, Emperor.... I have seen a new Light. A dark curtain has suddenly lifted and revealed to me the ancient glory of Mevar from the age of Ramayana. The story of the victory of Bappa Rao, the tale of Samar Singh's self-immolation, of the renunciation of Chanda and the valour of Kumbha—I saw the dramas of their greatness re-enacted before these very eyes. And suddenly a resplendent gleam lit up the mists of the past and out of it flashed the glittering sword of my brother Pratap Singh. That visionary sword pierced through me, and I bled for very shame.

JEHANGIR. (*Sarcastically*) And then—pray go on—

SAGAR. (*Not heeding the irony*) I bled in burning shame as I thought how I had helped the enemies of this noble race, deceiving myself that I was doing justly. And then....one day

....I saw....O Emperor, I can hardly describe the awful beauty of that vision. (*His eyes fill with tears and his voice chokes.*)

JEHANGIR. (*Ironically*) Go on—we are all attention.

SAGAR. It was no history of some hoary age, Emperor, it was my own daughter in flesh and blood—is not strange? My own daughter....the daughter of this craven renegade who begged for crumbs at the Moghul's door. She it was that opened these eyes. She taught me to love that country whose glorious past I had sought to defame and betray. My lips were parched and my throat was dry when I embraced my daughter. My heart overflowed. Pride blended with shame and love with worship. And so, and so—I handed over the Fort of Chittore to my brother's son.

JEHANGIR. (*Sternly*) Have you come prepared for death?

SAGAR. Fully prepared. I used to tremble at the name of Death, but now it has no fears for me. I come to expiate the sins of my past life.

JEHANGIR. Your wish shall be granted. Sentry!

SAGAR. Why need you call the sentry? I have courage enough to be my own executioner. (*Stabs himself and falls to the ground. He holds out his blood-stained hands.*) May my sins be atoned for in this blood! (*Dies*).

ACT IV

Scene I.

The banks of Udaisagar on a moonlight night. Rana Amar Singh reclines on a dais of white marble. His eyes are closed. The gentle lapping of the waters of the lake is audible. A cuckoo calls out intermittently. Young girls of the royal family dance and sing a Holy song. The theme: the Gopis of the hallowed city of Brindaban offering to Lord Krishna their adoration and yearning.

Darling of soul! in soul abide,
Thou art our love's one end and aim,
On the crest of its imperious tide
We leave our moorings thee to meet.

Shower on us thy radiant smile,
We'll answer with our tender tears:
Our love for thee is cleansed of guile
And so nor sin nor virtue fears.

We weave with life a wreath for thee
As offering at thy feet divine,
A symbol of hope's white harmony,
Luminous with thy laughter-shine.

Compassionate! wilt thou not play
Thy marvel Flute we all implore?
In the songless world, how, night and day,
Its music we await, adore!

Thy kingdom in our hearts we seek,
All earthly glory we decline
For thee, our dreamland's Prince unique,
Unto whom thy maids their all resign.

Whether thou love or no— love thee
We will and crave no meed's return:
We only love— and love to be
Thy altar— thy dominion.

RANA. They are so enwrapped in their play that they would scarcely know it if the ground were to tremble under their feet. All creation holds us forgetful through the endless hours of our play. And all is illusion. But hush.....here is Manasi.

Enter Manasi.

ACT IV—SCENE I

MANASI. Father, why are you still here? The air is chilled. Come in with me.

RANA. I will come very soon, dearest one. My heart finds peace on these banks of the Udaisagar.

MANASI. Father!

RANA. Manasi, do you never feel that this world is nothing but a curious tapestry, woven of many-coloured deceptions?

MANASI. Deceptions, father?

RANA. Yes. The world holds us at play with our longings and desires lest, being free to contemplate the eternal within us we should become immortal.

MANASI. Father, I cannot persuade myself that the world is as you say. I cannot think that it is evil.

RANA. Look at this moonlight. Listen to the lapping of the waters below. Try for one moment to feel all the sweet softness of the breeze. The world would make us forgetful of everlasting beauty, and lure us away towards our little sorrows and petty joys. Manasi, I shall renounce this world. It is all illusion.

MANASI. If it be an illusion, father, it is an enchanting one too. Indeed, this world is beautiful in itself. It loves us very much. Just when we begin to be parched and scorched in the unbearable heat of summer, the rain with its soft persistent music comes to soothe us with a million water-drops. Just when we begin to freeze in winter, spring is born again, and its sweet and fragrant winds blow away the foreign veils of mist. When we grow tired of the burning light of day, night comes to bend over us like a tender mother, and rests our aching heads on her peaceful lap. But that is not all—

RANA. Where then does all this sweetness fulfil itself?

MANASI. In the world of man's sorrow and aspiration. Do you see yonder lake, father?

RANA. I do.

MANASI. Do you see how the moonlight falls upon it?

RANA. I do.

MANASI. Can you hold it and keep it?

RANA. What do you mean?

MANASI. I mean the moonlight, the music of the water. When darkness envelops the bosom of the water, where does all that light and beauty go?

RANA. Who can say, little mother?

MANASI. Who indeed! This much is certain, that it cannot be lost. It lives on, surely, in the memory of the solitary watcher, in the dream of the poet, in the love of the mother, in the adoration of holy minds, in the sympathy of men. The beautiful in man is ever moulding afresh the beauty and harmony

of the universe. Were this not so, where would universal beauty ever find its fulfilment?

RANA. Is there even the shadow of any beauty in man, little mother? The eyes of all men watch me covetously whenever I eat, as though I was depriving them of food. There is so much greed, so much envy, so much enmity in man's little world.

MANASI. There lies man's failing. If it was not for this failing, what place would there be for man's compassion in the world? Man would scarcely ever know the deep joy that lies in helping his brother. Is it necessary to take leave of the world, merely because it happens to be base? The world is base, I know, but it is the delight of those who understand to try and lift it up, though never so little.

RANA. You have spoken the truth, I grant it. My brain is a little fevered to-day. I cannot understand why.

In the distance a voice calls: "Manasi, Manasi!"

MANASI. I am coming, mother, Father, let us go in. It is growing dark. *(Exit.)*

RANA. Earth's angel! She is a star dropped from heaven. a phantom of delight... What a tender breeze is blowing! There's not one speck of cloud in the sky. The world is silent. Only the river is musical with the sound of its waters. It is almost as though a band of shining silver-haired creatures was bathing there and the murmur of the waves was their far-off laughter. The leaves on the trees are stirring in the moonlight as if they were dallying with the eager air and their rustling is very like the voice of their secret delight. I almost begin to believe that even inanimate things experience an inward rapture. I wonder..

Enter the Rani.

RANI. Rana....

RANA. Hush, Rani, I am dreaming.

RANI. Wide-awake? Rana, I never felt so worried in my life.

RANA. The enchantment is broken. What is the matter, Rani?

RANI. What indeed! Nowadays girls don't seem to pay any heed to what their elders tell them. Only the other day Govind Singh's daughter and son left the house and went away, just because their father happened to scold them a little. And yesterday....

RANA. The dream has vanished. Once again dull thud of facts and loud tales of a tedious world!

RANI. How difficult girls are in this generation! It was not so when we were young. Things used to be so different then—

ACT IV—SCENE I

RANA. I suppose that was in the age of Truth, Rani? All my life I have noticed that mothers invariably imagine themselves to belong to the age of pure godliness and their daughters to the age of black degeneration.

RANI. I have not come here hungry for your sallies, Rana. If you are really thinking of Manasi's marriage, make haste about it, or it will be too late.

RANA. Rani, I don't think Manasi will ever get married. I don't think she is very anxious to marry.

RANI. That is only your fancy. You dreamed it.

RANA. Thanks be to Heaven for my dreams! You never indulge in them, do you?

RANI. Never mind about my dreams. Let us hear what *you* think should be done.

RANA. I really could not tell you. Why not wait and see.

RANI. How wait and see? To think that our envoy to the Maharaj has not yet returned from Jodhpur.

RANA. Arun *has* returned, Rani.

RANI. Has he? And what date has been fixed for the marriage?

RANA. The Maharaj refuses to accept Manasi as his daughter-in-law.

RANI. What?

RANA. The Maharaj is deeply offended with me.

RANI. Why?

RANA. Because, it seems, I not only withstood the Moghuls but defeated them.

RANI. I told you from the very first that Manasi's marriage would never be settled. How could it, in the midst of all this clashing of arms?

RANA. I am inclined to agree with you. Manasi's heart was never really set on marriage. It has all been a great mistake.

RANI. What do you mean?

RANA. I mean our attempts to bring about Manasi's alliance with the son of Jodhpur, our endless conflicts with the Moghuls, your marriage with me, my kingdom; my life! —all, all has been one long chain of errors.

RANI. And I dare say that if you had never married me, you would have included *that* in your catalogue of errors, too. Why do you smile?

RANA. I hear the Maharaj has gone to Agra.

RANI. Is that so? Why?

RANA. Probably to invite the Moghuls to another war.

RANI. Another war? And is that what makes you smile? Is war a laughing matter?

RANA. It is the one jest that never palls. Laugh, Rani!

RANI. Yes, laugh with you, join in your madness!

RANA. Happy prospect, indeed! For at the end of it all not one man will be alive. Every man in Mevar will be wiped out.

RANI. I don't want to hear about the death of Mevar's men, I want to hear about the marriage of Mevar's daughter.

RANA. But how can the marriage come about pray!

RANI. Invade the Maharajah's province.

RANA. There, for the first time, spoke in you the blood of your forefathers. But Rani, devotion, say our scriptures, is even more powerful than daring. The Maharaja is devoted to the Moghuls: I have only my dare-devilry to rely on. So?

RANI. Will you then accept this insult in silence?

RANA. We shall have to accept the insult, but not in silence. We shall accept it with cries loud and long. Go, go and see if the evening meal is ready. Go, my queen, and fear for nothing. All will perish. What can man do when God Himself cannot save a race from degeneration? Go, my queen.

RANI. But how have you done wrong?

RANA. How? Merely in belonging to one and the same caste as the Maharaja. Rani, when a boat sinks through the fault of one voyager, all the other voyagers must sink with him too, must they not? Go, Rani, go in. (*Exit Rani.*)

RANA. How deceptive this moonlight... only a mask the storm wears! *Exit*

Re-enter Manasi

MANASI. Ajay has gone away... without bidding me farewell... not even a word did he send me before departing! Ajay, Ajay! How could you go away like this... in a world of moon and beauty!

She sings sadly:

Why is the moon so beauteous?—

She imitates his face of dream.

Why is the lotus a deep of gold?—

She borrows from his brow of gleam.

How does the cuckoo sing so sweet?—

Her songs are his own messages.

How is the zephyr so fragrant—cool?—

He's laden with his tenderness.

From worlds of clay to worlds of sky

Is loud his light of loveliness.

Why is the earth so lovable?—

She bears in her heart his feet's impress.

Life's cruel ironies and flaws,

Dark flings and frowns of destiny,—

I welcome all for his twin eyes'

Soft radiance of eternity.

Scene II.

Mohabat Khan's camp—Morning. Mohabat Khan, Parvez and Maharaj Gaja Singh are discussing plans of campaign.

MOHABAT. Shahzada, let us delay no longer. Go and besiege the fort of Chittore. Take ten thousand men with you.

PARVEZ. Very well, Commander.

MOHABAT. And you Maharaj, see that the villages are burnt down, from one end of the country to the other. If anybody crosses your path, cut him down. But not one woman must be touched; bear that carefully in mind.

GAJA. It shall be done, Mohabat Khan. Not a single Rajput shall survive in Mevar.

MOHABAT. I believe you, Maharaj. The enmity that the Rajputs bear towards the Moslems is never so bitter as the hostility they bear towards their own kith and kin. You have only to read ancient Indian history to prove it; the Hindus are never so pleased as when they are torturing their own brothers. And I know there is nobody so well qualified as you to exterminate these Rajputs; that is why I have entrusted this part of the work to you. Go and carry out my orders.

GAJA. Very well, Commander. *(Exit)*

MOHABAT. Beware Hindus and Rajputs, beware, Mevar! This time it is not a battle between nations; it is a struggle for life and death between two religions. We shall see who wins.

Scene III.

An apartment in the Palace of Udaipur.—Night. Rana Amar Singh and Satyavati.

RANA. So this time, Mohabat Khan comes to fight?

SATYAVATI. Yes, Rana, Mohabat is on the march with a hundred thousand men.

(The Rana draws a long breath.)

RANA. Did I not predict that this war would be the last? All will be lost, all, all! Nearly the whole of Rajputana has succumbed to the Moghul. Why should Mevar's mountain peak survive alone, in splendid isolation? Can such a thing be allowed by the divine laws of God? Satyavati, why do you bend your head down so sadly? Is it because Mevar is doomed? Why, this is joyful news, sister!

SATYAVATI. You call it joyful news, Rana?

RANA. Is it not? How long shall Mevar lie suffering torment on her death-bed? This time there will be an end to her tortures.

SATYAVATI. Am I to understand that the Rana will not fight again?

RANA. Not fight? Of course I shall fight...and by all that is sacred. I am going to wage the most desperate war that was ever waged in history. The wars we fought in the past were only child's play. But now there will be vast upheaval, a monstrous devastation. This war will be a war between brothers and all Hindustan shall witness it.

SATYAVATI. I hear that the Maharaja of Jodhpur, Gaja Singh, has joined Mohabat Khan.

RANA. Indeed! Then he has accepted our invitation. I wondered whether the Maharaja would be so discourteous as to refuse it.

SATYAVATI. That blot upon the name of Rajputana!

RANA. Don't call him that. He is a devout worshiper. It is we who have disgraced the name our people bear, for not once in all these years have we turned to the true God. Gaja Singh spoke like an oracle, for truly he worships the Moghul Emperor as God himself.

SATYAVATI. To think a Rajput should take up arms against Rajputs—Alas for Mevar! *(She wipes away a tear)*.

RANA. Satyavati, when God made Hindustan He wrote on her forehead the prophecy that her own children would work her downfall. How could a prophecy fail? Think of Taxila. Think of Man Singh, Jay Chand, Sakta Singh. And here, in our day, the same history repeats itself through our Mohabat Khans and Gaja Singhs. Go and announce that we are going to fight again. I am coming.

(Exit Satyavati)

When vitality is departed even a pimple grows apace into a carbuncle. When self stands against self what remains worth the salvage?

Enter Govind Singh.

Here comes Govind Singh.

GOVIND. Rana! Mohabat Khan is setting fire to the huts of all our innocent and helpless villagers!

RANA. It is as it should be.

GOVIND. We shall avenge this.

RANA. Most assuredly we shall. How else could the destruction of Mevar be complete?

GOVIND. You will fight, Rana, will you not?

RANA. Assuredly. Need you ask? How many soldiers have we? Five thousand? They will do, they will do. Just the right number for us to send into the jaws of death. Mohabat Khan has brought a hundred thousand men with him, has he not? Excellent, excellent.

ACT IV—SCENE III

GOVIND. Rana! (*Bows his head*).

RANA. What, Govind, your head droops, too? Wake up, dear friend! For is this not a festal day? Let joyful music sound from house to house. Let the blood-red banner of Mevar float on palace-top and mountain-peak. Let us gaze upon ist glory for the last time; for when this day is done, our eyes shall not behold it again.

GOVIND. Rana, we shall fight bravely and die like heroes. And yet.....it is our fate to die in the bitter knowledge that.... that....this tragedy cannot be averted. (*Breaks down*).

RANA. Why grieve? All men must lose their mothers, soon or late. Our Mother, the mother of us all, must also die.... but we die with her—and there's an end to it.

GOVIND. Be it so, Rana. (*Wipes a tear away*).

RANA. I cry Amen. Let us embrace each other for the last time before we die. (*They embrace*) You may go now, Govind Singh....and prepare yourself and your brothers for death.

(*Exit Govind Singh*).

Enter the Rani.

Is that the Rani? Rejoice, Rani, rejoice!

RANI. (*Expectantly*) Is Manasi's marriage to be celebrated after all?

RANA. It is Mevar's marriage that is going to be celebrated, this time, Rani.

RANI. Have you gone mad, Rana? Mevar's marriage! Whatever do you mean?

RANA. I mean that Mevar will soon be wed....to death.

RANI. You are raving! Are you ill?

RANA. Now brother shall shed brother's blood. Rejoice, Rani, rejoice! Death invites us all, and beckons us to his black festival.

(*Exit Rana*).

RANI. The worst has come to pass. I always knew that it would be so. Everybody has gone mad. What hope is there now?

Enter Manasi.

MANASI. Mother, what has happened to father? He is stalking about from room to room, like a madman!

RANI. Your father has gone mad—stark staring mad. Let us go and tend him. (*Exit*).

MANASI. Is Mohabat Khan truly a Rajput? Is Gaja Singh truly a Rajput? Such enmity, such hatred! Alas, fallen race! Brother clamours for brother's blood! who can save?

Scene IV.

A village-path in Mevar. Arun and Satyavati walking together.

SATYAVATI. Arun!

ARUN. Mother!

SATYAVATI. Are your feet weary?

ARUN. No, mother, not at all.

SATYAVATI. We shall find shelter in this village to-night.

ARUN. Why must we do so, mother?

SATYAVATI. We must call the villagers together.

ARUN. Why?

SATYAVATI. For war. The stalwart men of Mevar have been killed to a man. Now we have to create a new race of dauntless fighters...and prepare them for worship at the altars of the Motherland. Come let us go. It is nearly dusk. (*Exeunt*).

Enter Villagers.

1ST VILLAGER. O what ruin, what misery in this beautiful land!

2ND VILLAGER. Mohabat Khan himself has come. You know what that means.

3RD VILLAGER. Is Mohabat Khan a good soldier?

1ST VILLAGER. There's a fine question to ask!

4TH VILLAGER. What's that you say? Nonsense, nonsense! He has never been trained up for war. Why, he was only born the other day!

2ND VILLAGER. There's no man that isn't born some time or other. That's no proof that he doesn't know a thing or two.

4TH VILLAGER. You are a mighty reasoner, you are.

1ST VILLAGER. Look...they have set fire to that village down yonder!

OTHERS. Where?

1ST VILLAGER. There....Can't you see smoke rising?

4TH VILLAGER. That's only a cloud.

2ND VILLAGER. Have you ever seen a cloud rising out of the stony earth? Or a cloud whirling on the tops of houses? Can't you see that black thing twisting and rising up into the air?

4TH VILLAGER. That? It's only a puff of dust.

2ND VILLAGER. Have you ever seen dust look so black?

4TH VILLAGER. You're too fond of reasoning, my friend.

1ST VILLAGER. There you are! Can't you hear folk shouting wildly down in that village?

OTHERS. Yes, we hear, we hear!

ACT IV—SCENE IV

4TH VILLAGER. They are only singing. Or perhaps the donkeys of the village are braying in chorus.

2ND VILLAGER. To his ears there's no difference between the shouting of a man and the braying of an ass.

1ST VILLAGER. Look, look—there are the villagers running up the hill towards us, and oh, they're shouting pitifully!

3RD VILLAGER. And there's the army behind them, firing a rain of shots.

Cries in the distance, growing louder and louder: "Lord have mercy....Don't shoot us!Don't shoot us!"

1ST VILLAGER. Alas, alas! poor souls!

Ajay and Kalyani enter.

AJAY. Villagers! why do you stand here doing nothing? Run and help your brothers in yonder village.

VILLAGERS. O Sir, what do you want us to do?

AJAY. Have you the heart to stand looking coldly on at all this butchery?

4TH VILLAGER. And do you want us to die where we stand? Let us fly. They are coming this way.

KALYANI. Do you imagine that you can save yourselves by flying like cowards? You cannot. Remember, not a soul will escape. Your turn will come. Your houses will be burned down too.

1ST VILLAGER. We shall see about that when it happens. Never think of death while you can live. Come along! don't stand and gape. They are coming....They are coming!

(Exeunt all save Ajay and Kalyani).

AJAY. Listen! the sounds of wailing and weeping seem to be coming nearer and nearer. Can't you hear the gloomy thud of the guns? Kalyani, stand aside for a moment. I will save them. *(She steps aside)* I don't know whether I can save them. But at least I can die bravely in the attempt. I will pay toll to the truth Manasi has taught me. Here they come!

(He draws his sword).

Villagers run in, pursued by Soldiers with drawn swords.

VILLAGERS. Save us, save us. *(They fall at Ajay's feet).*

AJAY. *(to the Soldiers)* Stand off!

1ST SOLDIER. Stop that. *(There is a clash of swords. Two or three soldiers are wounded by Ajay, and fall).*

OTHER SOLDIERS. Die then, infidel!

They close with Ajay. One by one the Moghul soldiers drop to the ground. Suddenly another band of soldiers rushes in to the fight.

AJAY. There is no hope now. Fly, Kalyani, save yourself!

KALYANI. Brother, do you think I will leave you to die here alone under the sword-blades of the enemy?

She steps forward. At this moment a Moghul fires a shot. Ajay falls. Kalyani rushes to him.

Brother, brother!

2ND SOLDIER. Who is this? Capture her.

3RD SOLDIER. No....No....Our Commander has ordered us not to hurt a single woman.

AJAY. I am dying, Kalyani. May the Lord protect you. Farewell, sister. *(He dies).*

KALYANI. Brother, brother! where have you gone? *(She falls on the corpse).*

4TH SOLDIER. Where do you think he has gone? He has gone to the place where we all have to go, sooner or later.

KALYANI. I shall not mourn your loss, brave Warrior! You have fulfilled your heroic destiny. You have given your life in a noble attempt to save the helpless and weak. And who are these men? Men?Are they not rather the bondslaves of Satan himself? Blood-thirsty beasts of prey, you that burn down the houses of the innocent, you that butcher defenceless villagers in cold blood—even hell will shrink to quarter you.

1ST SOLDIER. It's no good cursing and swearing at us like that, Bibi Saheb. Our general has told us to set fire to the houses and kill every man alive. We are only carrying out our orders.

KALYANI. Who is your general?

1ST SOLDIER. Don't you know? Why, he's the famous Mohabat Khan.

3RD SOLDIER. Come on, come on. Let us be off.

KALYANI. Mohabat Khan! And has he given such monstrous orders? I can scarcely believe it.

4TH SOLDIER. Let us go, Let us go.

KALYANI. Wait a moment. I will go with you.

2ND SOLDIER. Go with us? Where to?

KALYANI. To your commander.

2ND SOLDIER. Do you want to do us a bad turn?

4TH SOLDIER. That's what it is.

2ND SOLDIER. She wants to go on her own responsibility. Why not take her with us?

1ST SOLDIER. Yes, we'll take her.

KALYANI. Let us go.

Scene V.

The Royal Assembly Hall in Udaipur—Morning. The Rana, Govind Singh and Chieftains.

RAGHUVIR. Rana, we have fought as long as it was possible to fight.

RANA. No, Raghuvir. We must fight on to the end. I will listen to no counsels. The army is fully equipped, is it not?

KESHAV. (*Smiling sadly*) Army indeed, Rana! It is doubtful whether the whole of Mevar can supply us with as many as five thousand men. It is madness to fight with a force such as this. The Moghul army is a hundred thousand strong.

RANA. It is not impossible. Keshav Rao, you forget that one man in my army is a match for twenty in theirs.

JAYA SINGH. Pray consider, Maharaja. The wisest course for us now is to make peace with the Moghuls.

RANA. That can never be. When I held out for peace in the past you opposed me. The Moghuls were willing then. The golden moment has passed. It is now utterly impossible for me to beg for peace at the Moghul's feet.

KESHAV. But—

RANA. Enough, I pray you. No choice is left to us now. The time has come for us to fight to the last man. What does Govind Singh say?

GOVIND. Rana, we shall sacrifice our life but not our honour.

RANA. We shall sacrifice our life but not our honour. Well said, Govind Singh. We shall fight.

RAGHUVIR. Maharana!

RANA. I am in no mood for words. I am bent on war, yes—war. Muster the army. Let the blood-red banner of Mevar float gloriously to the last in the sky. Sound the trumpet. Go, make ready.

(*Exeunt all except the Rana*).

Mevar, beautiful Mevar, Mother of us all. How lovely is the aureole I see round your brow to-day! Never in all my days have I beheld it shining there before! See Mother, how they come....they are dragging you ruthlessly to the place of execution—in tattered garments, dust-covered, your beautiful hair all dishevelled! What awful splendour lightens your face to-day, mother mine? Scarcely have I known you till now, O Mother! Throughout your past you have shone with the sun of a glorious destiny. To-day that sun has set. Is that why your brow becomes resplendent in the evening with an unseen light? Lo! how dazzling yet beautiful the radiance! How deep the blue! How eloquent the silent glory!

Scene VI.

The camp of the Moghul Commander. Mohabat Khan. Morning. Mohabat Khan and Maharaj Gaja Singh are pacing up and down.

GAJA. Was the Rana there in person to lead his ridiculous handful?

MOHABAT. Yes, Maharaj, but he went back alone. Of his five thousand men, four thousand fell in action.

GAJA. That was insolent courage, to dare a hundred thousand men with only five!

MOHABAT. Insolent courage indeed! I tell you. Maharaj, I feel strangely elated to-day.

GAJA. It is not surprising.

MOHABAT. Why am I so elated? You cannot imagine what I feel. Nor could you guess the reason why.

GAJA. I am sure I could not.

MOHABAT. I am proud to think that though I am a Moslem by faith, I am still a Rajput by caste. I glory in the thought that I am cousin to Amar Singh, who stood with his five thousand men, to face a hundred thousand well-trained Moghul soldiers. Surely he knew that he was standing on a pin-point of death. Such fearlessness and patriotism as this you can only find in the heart of a Rajput. And I too am a Rajput.

GAJA. Commander, it is true.

MOHABAT. And you yourself....even though you have fallen so low to-day, may yet feel proud that you were born a Rajput. And yet again your head must bow in shame at the thought that you, who might have risen to a peak have prepared the abyss. As for me, I am beyond redemption. But there is this much consolation left, I have changed my Rajput name and am now a Rajput no more. But you—you cannot say the same.

GAJA. The Rana of Mevar—was he not slain—not taken prisoner?

MOHABAT. You seem very much distressed, Maharaj! No, he escaped untouched. I gave orders that he was not to be killed or taken prisoner. Such men are not to be lost to the world. Before an enemy like this, I stay my hand.

GAJA. Have I your leave to go, commander?

MOHABAT. You may go. *(Exit Gaja Singh.)*

Yonder lies a village in flames.

I can hear the wailing of villagers in the distance. O Hindus! die in the vainglory of your faith! Have I not broken your pride, your arrogance? Have I not shattered....

Enter Kalyani escorted by two soldiers.

Who is this?

ACT IV—SCENE VI

1ST SOLDIER. We do not know, Commander. We found her on our way and she comes to you at her own request.

MOHABAT. Who are you, I pray?

KALYANI. Commander, the knowledge will profit you but little.

MOHABAT. What may you want with me, young lady?

KALYANI. I come to you to demand justice.

MOHABAT. Justice! What do you....

KALYANI. These soldiers have slain my brother without any provocation.

MOHABAT. Why did they do that? Soldiers!

2ND SOLDIER. Master, we were out killing the villagers. This Lady's brother died fighting for them.

MOHABAT. Is this true?

KALYANI. It is quite true. Your soldiers were butchering innocent villagers. My brother rushed to their rescue. They slew him.

MOHABAT. Which means that he was slain in war.

KALYANI. That, no doubt, is how *you* would put it. Very well then. My brother was murdered in *war*. Does that please you better?

MOHABAT. These men are not to blame, noble lady. They acted under my express orders. Soldiers, leave the room.

(Exeunt soldiers.)

KALYANI. Was it indeed *you* who ordered them to take the life of harmless villagers?

MOHABAT. Yes, it was I.

KALYANI. And to burn down every village and hamlet?

MOHABAT. Yes, lady.

KALYANI. Surely you cannot be so cruel.

MOHABAT. Why do you hold so high an opinion of me, may I know?

KALYANI. My husband could never be so heartless.

MOHABAT. Your husband?

KALYANI. Yes, *my* husband. Look at me, my lord. Can you not recognise me? I am your Hindu wife, Kalyani. I am she whom you renounced for no wrong of mine.

MOHABAT. *(Starts)* Kalyani! then they have slain your brother, Ajay?

KALYANI. Yes, High Commander of the Moghul army! And I had come forth in search of you! Love was the guiding star of my stormy life when I left my moorings. I had none to turn to. It was then that he, my only brother, offered to steer my boat in unchartered waters. Such a friend, a peerless comrade, *(her voice is half-choked with tears)* the only soul who sympathised with me against all....you have been responsible

for killing through your irresponsible orders. (*Controlling herself*) But what's the use? I have only one prayer left now: ask your soldiers to kill me too.

MOHABAT. Kalyani, I humbly beg of you to forgive me.

KALYANI. But first tell me, have I understood you rightly—did you say that these villagers have been done to death by orders issuing from your own lips?

MOHABAT. Yes, Kalyani....It is perfectly true. I commanded my army to exterminate the entire race of Rajputs.

KALYANI. My God, my God, was this then Thy will when, at Thy bidding, I turned my face away from all I held so dear? Why did I not rather perish in the first hour of my setting forth? Alas! on this one and self-same day, I have lost brother and husband too. What woman was ever so accursed as I?

(She covers her face and sobs).

MOHABAT. Hear, then, Kalyani, why I have—

KALYANI. There is nothing that I seek to know, my lord. I only know that the joy of my life's desire has gone. Long did I adore you—nay worship you—from far, but to-day I see before me the sworn enemy of my people and me. Commander of the Moghuls! in my eyes you are lower than the lowest of your soldiers. They at least have been taught by their faith that it is lawful to kill man whom they call unbeliever. But you, a child of our country, through whose veins the royal blood of the Rajput flows, to think that you have turned traitor and stretched out your arm to destroy your own kinsmen! What shall I say of you, my lord? You have far outstripped the Moghuls on the path of destruction and despair. For the Moghuls only thought to conquer Mevar. They never wished to destroy peaceful villages and murder the innocent. Like a dog, you have licked up the crumbs of another faith, you exult aloud in your devilish cruelty. Under your hand, Mevar has become one vast burial field, and the skies re-echo to the pitiful wailings of her stricken people. Where, O God, are Thy Tablets of judgment? Was no due punishment ever recorded for the crimes of men such as these? Let the clouds be riven asunder! A burning fiery thunderbolt shall fell upon his head!

MOHABAT. Kalyani, it was for your sake, for your sake only, that I began this war!

KALYANI. For my sake? You lie.

MOHABAT. I do not lie, Kalyani. On the day that I heard how your father had driven you forth because of the bitter hatred he bore the Moslems, I swore to wreak vengeance on Mevar.

KALYANI. Indeed! And what lofty principles guided your hand, when you devastated a whole country to avenge the wrong of one single man?

MOHABAT. Can this truly surprise you Kalyani—you who have learned the lessons of the Ramayana so well? Was not the entire kingdom of Lanka destroyed for the sin of one single Ravana? And your father—did he not curse all Moslems in the name of all Hindus? I came to revenge that curse. I came to spread desolation in Mevar because of the Hindus' bitter hatred for the entire Moslem race.

KALYANI. It was for those who were born Moslems to exact vengeance, if vengeance was due. When you yourself embraced Islam, you did so knowing full well that the Hindus hated the Moslems. This evil is in your heart because you set it there. Why do you deceive yourself with the thought that you came to retaliate for injustice? What little you have within you of the Moslem could never, I know, have goaded you on to such revenge! It was blind and petty conceit, your pride in your new name that drove you on to all this cruelty!

MOHABAT. (*Startled, half aloud to himself*) Can this indeed be true?

KALYANI. You set out to decimate the kingdom of Mevar because of your hatred for one single man. Can this be the teaching of your religion! Is this your code of honour as a soldier and a man? —Ah God, my God, what hast thou done unto me? Out of my dreams I had built a place of joy in the sky; to-day it has fallen to earth, in a fraction of a moment, like a child's house of cards.

MOHABAT. Kalyani! Listen—

KALYANI. Hush. It is all finished. My fond illusion has been shattered. There was a time when I would defiantly say: 'You are my husband and I am your wife—who can come between us?' How little the heart knows itself! For it's the same heart that now turns away from you in loathing...shudders to see rolling between you and me an ocean of blood...the blood of my brother and my countrymen.

MOHABAT. Kalyani, I pray you—

KALYANI. No more. We part for ever. (*Looking upward*) O God, my God! You have taken away everything I had.... but do not (*her eyes fill*) do not take away the last prop—my faith in your divinity at the sight of Hell masquerading as human beings.

(*Exit distractedly.*)

ACT V

Scene I.

The royal apartments in Udaipur.—Night. Manasi singing alone.

How in my heart of hush I cherished him,
I longed to say,
But never said, alas, 'twas like a dream
That would display
Its rhythm and cadence in its hidden world
Of gleam for ever,
Where now it sighed like winds and now it purred
Like to a river.
He wooed me with his eyes tender as scent
Transformed to light,
But woe is me, my stormy love lay pent
In the hush of Night!

Enter the Rana.

MANASI. My father! So you have come back from the war, father?

RANA. I have, Manasi.

MANASI. What has happened to you, father? Why do you look so pale and distracted?

RANA. Hush. Don't say a word. I have just returned after gazing on a miraculous scene.

MANASI. What happened, father? Was it the war—

RANA. No, there was no war this time. Only a storm of fire, which passed over the battlefield and carried away all our men.

MANASI. The Lord have mercy upon us!

RANA. There was no time even to realise the horror and grandeur. There was something unearthly about it all....a fierce cloudburst of blood-red meteors, the deluge of some huge curse. A rending earthquake seemed to shake my whole body, a whirlwind danced a few scarlet rounds in my brain and died away. There was no time to realise anything. Suddenly, when all was over, I awoke from a kind of stupor and found to my horror that I was all alone, the only point of life in a battlefield carpeted with thousands of our dead. O what an eerie sensation it was!

MANASI. Father, your hand is feverish, you are overwrought. Sit down, and I will take care of you.

RANA. I paced that mighty field of the dead alone. No one ever thought of killing me.

MANASI. Have you admitted defeat?

RANA. It matters little whether I do or not. War is not like an encounter of words where anyone may claim the victory merely by repudiating defeat. It is too hard and obvious a reality. But why did they not kill me? In the unearthly silence of that scene of death I called as loud as my lungs could call to Mohabat Khan and to Gaja Singh, to come and kill me. But there was no response!

MANASI. Father, I pray you be calm.

RANA. I cannot imagin why Mohabat Khan has not entered the fort of Chittore in the first flush of victory. He can easily claim Chittore now.

MANASI. Father, why do you grieve because you have lost? In every battle someone must win, which means that someone must lose.

RANA. Little mother, you have spoken wisely. Someone must lose. Then why should we grieve? But why has he not killed me?

Enter the Rani.

RANA. Rani, I am now on the horns of a dilemma.

RANI. What did you say?

RANA. They never killed me—Why didn't they? Could you tell me? (*Rani looks at Manasi*) Listen, Rani. I stood alone that night in the deep silence of the battlefield. O what a scene it was? Rani, you cannot even imagine it. Overhead gleamed the highborn stationary multitude...and at my feet were countless eyes petrified in death. And between the stars above and the dead below, mass upon mass of impenetrable darkness, I felt at that moment as it I did not belong to this world. I felt that I was one of the innumerable dead...I was a living corpse...I flourished my sword in that darkness. Only the black and misty wind, cutting the blade with scorn, passed by. I called out to Mohabat Khan. But my voice echoed and wandered on all sides and then came back to me...And then, as I gazed on that battlefield, I knew that my golden kingdom had been shaken and shattered into dust by a relentless earthquake. Then the winds, blowing over the field of dead, seemed to have grown heavy with the weight of the disembodied souls of our heroes. I made a great effort, and contrived to heave a sigh. That sigh was so heavy that instead of soaring upward it dropped back to earth, dragged down by its own weight. It almost seemed to me that I could have found that sigh lying somewhere on the battlefield, if only the darkness had not been so black and thick.

RANI. What was fated to come, has come. Where is the

use in lamenting now? I knew long ago that this would happen.

RANA. Rani, you were right, perfectly right, when you warned me. I stood and watched Mevar gasping for breath in Death's black embrace. Lo, I have brought home her dead body on a bier. Would you like to see it? Come.

Scene II.

An open courtyard in Govind Singh's house. Some village gossips assembled.

1ST WOMAN-ATTENDANT. Alas, alas! it must be terrible sorrow for old Govind Singh. He has lost his only son.

2ND WOMAN-ATTENDANT. Let that be. What I cannot understand is why our mistress has turned Govind Singh's house into a guest-house for dead bodies.

1ST WOMAN-ATTENDANT. She does such extraordinary things? As if she had nothing better to do. Are there many people gathered together?

2ND WOMAN-ATTENDANT. Oooh! the courtyard is full. Govind Singh is not at home. Arun Singh has gone to fetch him. Mistress is standing near the mangled heap of corpses. Crowds are staring at them curiously from a distance.

1ST WOMAN-ATTENDANT. Is it dark there?

2ND WOMAN-ATTENDANT. Very. At the far end of one room a lamp burns very dimly. What is that? Who is that?

1ST WOMAN-ATTENDANT. Where?

2ND WOMAN-ATTENDANT. Who is that?

1ST WOMAN-ATTENDANT. Our princess. What a sight she looks! Her eyes are almost rolling out of their sockets and her garment trails in the dust.

3RD WOMAN-ATTENDANT. Hush...the princess is coming this way. Let us go. *(They go out).*

Enter Manasi from the other side.

MANASI. He has gone away. Ajay has gone for ever. He left me without one parting word. It hardly seems true. Oh, my brain is reeling. My eyes swim...a dead yellow dust seems to rise from the earth like smoke and pass into my blood... Something burns like a flame inside my body...The sky seems to have slipped away from overhead. The earth seems to have glided away from under my feet. Where am I?...Oh! *(Silence follows)* I was always so hard...In those days when Ajay came to my doors begging for one tiny drop of tenderness and compassion, with his eyes full of a beggar's entreaty, when he was

hirsting for one glance of pity from my eyes, I was hard-hearted and cruelly silent. That is why Ajay has gone away and left me,—mockingly, shattering my pride. Ajay—I long to-day to fall and die at your feet. If I only could tear open my heart and reveal my love to you! But alas, the time has fled and my longing remains unfulfilled. (*Suddenly*) But supposing that Ajay were not dead? Where is Govind Singh? Perhaps he may yet give me news of him. I must find him. (*Exit*).

Enter some villagers with Satyavati from one side, bearing the dead body of Ajay Singh on a mattress. Govind Singh enters from the other side with hair dishevelled and eyes blood-red.

GOVIND. This is my son's dead body. Where did you find it, Satyavati?

SATYAVATI. On the edge of a road.

GOVIND. How did he die?

SATYAVATI. Those who saw him die told me that Ajay fell while nobly attempting to save the innocent villagers from the murderous hands of the Moghul soldiers.

GOVIND. Satyavati, Satyavati! Ajay! My son! I was blinded by my harsh anger. O why did I not call you back when you were leaving the house? Why did I allow you to go? My life's jewel! You did not even give me time to crave your pardon. Such pride, such pride! Could you not even remember that I, your father, was very old? Ajay! Ajay!

SATYAVATI. Govind Singh, why do you grieve? Ajay has died the death of a hero. He died fighting to save the helpless.

GOVIND. True, Satyavati. He died for the helpless....he died for the helpless. Go then and burn his body with songs of rejoicing.

He covers up his face. The stretcher-bearers are about to carry Ajay's body away.

Stop, let me see his face once more....for the last time. My all in all! Wealth of my old age! Prop and comfort of a blind old man. Let me but once....once only....No....no....why should I grieve? That's what you say to me. You speak well. Ajay has given his life for the helpless. Mevar! Demon Goddess! are you not satisfied yet? You are now preparing to leave us and go away. Go....but you shall not go until your hunger is fully satisfied. My golden world! No, No....who says that Ajay is dead? There, he is looking at me. He is alive. Ajay, Ajay!

Govind Singh rushes towards Ajay's corpse. Satyavati stops him

SATYAVATI. Govind Singh! Pray calm yourself. Your son is dead.

GOVIND. Yes, yes, dead, dead. It is the truth. My eyes

did but deceive me. Ajay, Ajay. My all-in-all! (*He covers up his face with his hands*).

SATYAVATI. You are a brave general, Govind Singh! It does not become you to give way to such unmanly grief.

GOVIND. What are you saying? Satyavati? I can scarcely hear what you say. Speak up—raise your voice. A storm is raging loudly in my heart. I cannot hear you. Speak louder. Oh, oh, oh! (*He presses his breast in agony*).

Enter Kalyani.

KALYANI. Father, father!

GOVIND. Who called? Kalyani! A curse. See, you have been the death of my Ajay...you evil witch. Give him back, give him back to me.

KALYANI. Father, father....What, is this....? O Brother, alas, my brave godlike brother—is it you—O! (*Kalyani clasp the corpse*).

GOVIND. Away. Don't touch my Ajay. Away, I say—witch! (*He clutches her hand*).

KALYANI. Father. I am a witch indeed. Kill me. Father, I have been a curse in your house, an ill-omened star in Mevar.... for I have been the cause of the devastation of Mevar. Kill me. Remove this destroyer from the world. And all will be restored to you as it was before....

GOVIND. What is happening inside this heart? The fires of hell are burning there, demons dance round in wild frenzy. I cannot bear it any longer....indeed, I cannot bear it.

SATYAVATI. Govind Singh, do not give way to this unmanly grief. Let us burn the body of your heroic son with hearts of thanksgiving and pride, for your son died in a holy cause.

GOVIND. You are right, you are quite right. He died in a holy cause. I must not mourn. Forgive me. I should be proud, and yet.... (*with breaking voice*) Satyavati, I have grown very old, very old.

KALYANI. Father!

GOVIND. (*Tremblingly*) Come, Kalyani, come to this aged breast. Come, O sad, helpless, forsaken, motherless, unhappy daughter of mine! I could not see the glory of your wisely love, and the Lord has punished me for it. Go, go and burn this dead body.

The stretcher-bearers are again about to carry the bier away.
Enter Manasi.

MANASI. Stay one moment, I beg you! Let me look upon his face....for the last time.

SATYAVATI. Princess?

MANASI. Ajay! Beloved husband!

SATYAVATI. Ajay, her husband?

ACT V—SCENE III

MANASI. Listen, and witness, all of you standing by. In secret I was married to Ajay. I myself never even knew that we were married. In silence, in secret, that marriage of soul with soul was....O beloved, where are you? See, I have come, I am no longer the lofty teacher of truth that I once pretended to be. I am no longer the gracious princess that bent in pity to the poor. I am myself a miserable beggar-woman in rags—the beggar of your love. I am poorer to-day than the poorest beggar in the streets. Ajay, I never told you how deeply I loved you. I hardly knew myself. Forgive me, O Ajay,—will you not forgive me?

SATYAVATI. Alas, the princess is half crazed with sorrow. Peace, peace, Manasi, Ajay died nobly, fighting to save the lives of others.

MANASI. It is true. That is how every brave man ought to die. My dearly loved disciple! To-day the parts have changed hands; you have become my teacher. The rays of your glory have come down from heaven to light the poor earth. You have died as men should die. Govind Singh! you are indeed blessed in your old age, justly may you be proud of having had such a son. And blessed am I, who may look upon him as my husband. Govind Singh, this is indeed a time for joy, and exultation, and not for faint-hearted sorrow.

GOVIND. (*With a parched voice*) True, princess, alas, too true. Ajay gave his life for the helpless. Why should we grieve? (*His voice chokes*) Ajay has....for the sake....of the....country (*He breaks down, and covers his face with his hands*).

MANASI. It is all empty foolishness....One long uncontrollable sigh of grief drowns all sense of consolation. Ajay, Ajay....

KALYANI. What is it all about? I cannot understand. Is this heaven or earth? Are these gods or men standing here? Is this life or death? Who am I? Oh.... (*she swoons*).

SATYAVATI. Kalyani, Kalyani. (*Takes her head on her lap*).

GOVIND. The girl has swooned. Let her die. Let us all perish together—son, daughter, Mevar and I....we shall all go....my son has already gone....my daughter has gone....and Mevar....my beloved Mevar....she too is drowning....drowning there....she has gone. I will also go.

SATYAVATI. Destiny of darkness!With your last great storm now come and sweep us all away.

Scene III.

Mohabat Khan's tent on the edge of a mountain in Mevar. Mohabat Khan watching the sunset.

MOHABAT. The sun has set....at last.

Enter Gaja Singh.

GAJA. Khan Saheb.

MOHABAT. Maharaj.

GAJA. How is it that though you have been victorious, you have not as yet entered Udaipur with your soldiers?

MOHABAT. Have I to submit to you the why and wherefore of my military moves?

GAJA. No, no—not that—not that. I merely asked a question. Khan Saheb, I wonder if you have heard the latest news of all? The women of Mevar have taken up arms and are preparing to fight.

MOHABAT. Women have taken up arms? Women? Who ever heard of such a thing?

GAJA. Yes, but let us wait and see what kind of war they wage! A soft and tender element will surely grace such warfare. I shall certainly take part in it.

MOHABAT. Maharaj, is it really possible for you—a Rajput—to mouth such vile innuendos at the expense of Rajput ladies? Are you truly a Rajput?

GAJA. Mohabat Khan...how dare you—

MOHABAT. (*Hotly*) Silence, sir!I counsel you strongly to store up what little valour you have against the day in the future when your country shall need it. Go.

(*Exit Gaja Singh*).

Soldiers enter.

What news do you bring, Soldiers?

SOLDIERS. The Shahzada has arrived with his army.

MOHABAT. O has he? You may go.

(*Exit Soldiers*).

His coming is useless. The devastation of Mevar is complete. Yet I do not wish to enter the fort of Udaipur myself. Let this be undertaken by Shahzada and his Moghul soldiers. My work is done.

Enter Govind Singh.

Who are you, old man?

GOVIND. I am a citizen of Mevar.

MOHABAT. What brings you here?

GOVIND. Pray, let me draw my breath for one moment.

MOHABAT. Are you an envoy from Rana Amar Singh? Do you bring news of peace?

GOVIND. Never! Before that should happen, may my head be shivered to pieces by a thunderbolt!

MOHABAT. Then what brings you here?

GOVIND. I want to die. I have become old. I wish now to close my eyes in honourable death. I do not wish to die at the hands of a common soldier. O my God! if only I had the strength that I once had....No, Mohabat Khan! I know that

I can no longer stand up to face you in battle. But surely I can die like a man. I want to die at your hands.

MOHABAT. Old man, this is a fantastic desire!

GOVIND. Not so. In more than fifty battles, I have fought beside Rana Pratap. My body can testify to that with countless wounds and scars. Let my last wound be inflicted by your heroic sword.

MOHABAT. What will that profit you?

GOVIND. Little, indeed. But yet, though you have changed your religion, the Rajput blood still runs in your veins, as you will scarcely deny. And you are the Rana Pratap's own brother's son. I am proud to come and beg for my death at your hands.

MOHABAT. Are you Govind Singh?

GOVIND. Ha! Ha! you have recognised me at last, Mohabat Khan! Now do you understand why I am so eager to die? Mohabat Khan! you have this day conquered and devastated unhappy Mevar. But even so, we shall not allow you to enter the fort of Udaipur, rest assured of that. Mevar's soldiers are all dead...and there is not even the shadow of an army left to fight for her. But there is one man, one warrior still left—myself. I stand alone to face the Moghul army and challenge its power. You shall not enter Udaipur unless you pass over my dead body. Take up your weapon. (*He unsheathes his sword and flourishes it*).

MOHABAT. Hero of heroes! believe me when I tell you that I do not either wish or intend to enter the fort.

GOVIND. I am not concerned with your intentions. I tell you to take up your sword.

MOHABAT. Listen....

GOVIND. I am not here to listen to what you wish to say. My heart is consumed with burning fire. I have lost my son, I have lost my daughter....and now I want to end my life. I want to die before these eyes can see my beloved Mevar trodden under the foot of the enemy. I want to die before I see the son of Rana Pratap become a slave of the Moghuls. And I want to die at the hands of one who is a slave of another though a child of my country, who, though born a Hindu, is a Moslem by conversion, who is an enemy of his own brother....Come, no more delay. Where is your sword?

(*Mohabat takes up his sword and swears an oath by it.*)

MOHABAT. Hush....not one single wound shall my sword inflict on your body—no, never....never!

GOVIND. I don't want to hear you speak. Defend yourself now. Come.

MOHABAT. Govind Singh, I say....

GOVIND. Kill me....kill me....

MOHABAT. I have renounced the sword.

GOVIND. I shall not leave you. Take up your sword. I have come to die today and die I shall. Take up your sword, I say! I shall not let you go so easily.

As he is preparing to attack Mohabat Khan, Gaja Singh rushes in and fires at Govind, bringing him to the ground.

MOHABAT. What have you done, Maharaj?

GAJA. I have killed him.

MOHABAT. Do you know whom you have killed?

GAJA. A thief.

GOVIND. I am no thief, Maharaj. You are the thieves. I never wanted to loot another's kingdom. You have come and looted another's kingdom. Mohabat Khan! go now to Udaipur. Nobody will now defy you. Go, seize your own mother and consign her to slavery. (*He dies*).

Scene IV.

The Royal road running past the Fort of Udaipur.—Night. A soldier and some old men are gathered together under the fort.

1ST MAN. Why has the Rana left this fort, soldier? Where has he gone?

SOLDIER. I could not tell you. I have heard rumours that Mohabat Khan has renounced his sword and written a letter to the emperor. And that is why the Shahzada Khuram has come. Last night, a Moghul messenger came, bearing a letter from the Shahzada. I hear that in this letter he made offers of friendship to the Rana. Early this morning, when the Rana awoke, he mounted his horse and rode away towards the camp of the Shahzada.

2ND MAN. And then?

SOLDIER. I know nothing after that.

3RD MAN. The Rana has not returned as yet?

SOLDIER. No.

4TH MAN. Who went with him to the camp?

SOLDIER. No one. He was alone.

1ST MAN. Hist! who's that yonder?

2ND MAN. Surely it cannot be our Rana?

3RD MAN. Yes, there he is. But wait! Can it be the Rana, are you sure?

4TH MAN. He is dressed like the Rana. Who is that man, can you tell us, soldier?

ACT V—SCENE IV

SOLDIER. That is the Maharaj of Jodhpur. His name is Gaja Singh.

1ST MAN. Is he not the Raja that came with Mohabat Khan to attack Mevar?

SOLDIER. Yes, the same.

2ND MAN. He is a Rajput, is he not?

3RD MAN. Though he is a Rajput, he is yet the enemy of all Rajputs.

Enter Gaja Singh with Soldiers.

GAJA. Soldier, the gates of the fort are closed?

SOLDIER. Yes, Maharaj.

GAJA. Then throw them open. This fort is ours.

SOLDIER. Maharaj, I am sorry, but I cannot open the gates of this fort except by the orders of our master—Rana Amar Singh.

GAJA. Master? Amar Singh is no longer your master. I am your master now.

SOLDIER. You? I never knew that. But even so, I regret I am not allowed to open the gates of the fort for you unless I have orders from Rana Amar Singh.

GAJA. Soldiers, wrest the keys of the gates out of the hands of this impertinent knave.

SOLDIER. Not while I have life within me! (*He draws his sword*).

GAJA. Kill this man at once.

1ST MAN. (*To the others*) Why do you stand and gape? Come, at him, down with this insolent one! (*All together attack Gaja Singh*).

GAJA. Soldiers.... (*He defends himself*).

Enter from behind, the Rana Amar Singh with Moghul soldiers.

AMAR. Hold, hold, soldiers!

The Rajput soldiers withdraw their swords on seeing the Moghul soldiers.

RANA. Maharaj Gaja Singh, what business have you here?

GAJA. This fort is mine. I come to claim it.

RANA. Royal guest! The Rana Amar Singh will welcome you as best as he can. O dog of the Moghuls, accept the welcome that you so richly deserve! (*He strikes Gaja a blow in the face, knocking him down*). Brave soldier!—open the gates of the fort. Come. (*Moghul soldiers enter the fort with the Rana. The gates close behind him.*)

Scene V.

*A mountain-path in Mevar. Enter Satyavati, Arun and
sasant-women, singing:*

All shattered lies my cherished dream
and broken my Vina's leading string :*
Oh, how on this vast sepulchre
my soul her threnody will sing ?
Vanished is the ancient halo round
our Mevar mountain's purple brow,
Dense clouds with futile flares dislimn,
They melt no more in showers now.

The blood-red banner floats no more
on the Mevar mountain like a flame,
Descend O darkness and outblot
this scene of ignominy and shame.

No more in Mevar's groves sweet cuckoos
trill forth joy in leafy trees,
No more the flowers blossom—inviting
eager honey-haunted bees.
Spring zephyrs breathe no more of bliss
nor laughs the full moon in the sky,
No more the rivers dance to winds
nor purl in simple ecstasy.

The blood-red banner floats no more
on the Mevar mountain like a flame,
Descend O darkness and outblot
this scene of ignominy and shame

Mevar's rich glades are steeped in grief,
the bowers brood in silent gloom
And burghers walk the earth like wraiths
and happy homes like shadows loom,
No more keen sabres flash out challenge
wielded by her fearless kings,
The eyes of beauty are wan with pain
and juvenile laughter's taken wings.

The blood-red banner floats no more
on the Mevar mountain like a flame,
Descend O darkness and outblot
this scene of ignominy and shame.

* Vina : An Indian Musical instrument.

What shall survive in a house of doom?
 who will to us deep solace bring,—
 Except it be Mevar's last minstrels
 who of the perished grandeur sing?
 When high-born glories pass away,
 O may the lore in legend live!
 And may the ballads of the bards
 their dim far echoes still revive!

The blood-red banner floats no more
 on the Mevar mountain like a flame,
 Descend O darkness and outblot
 this scene of ignominy and shame.

Enter Hidayat Ali with three Soldiers.

HIDAYAT. Who are you?

SATYAVATI. I am a peasant woman.

HIDAYAT. And you wander about from place to place singing songs such as these?

SATYAVATI. Yes, indeed, soldier! that is what I live for.

HIDAYAT. You must not sing that song any more.

SATYAVATI. And why not, soldier?

HIDAYAT. This country is not yours now; it has passed into the hands of the Moghuls.

SATYAVATI. Victory to the Moghuls! We warred as long as Mevar was a free country. But now that Mevar has bowed her head and accepted the Moghul's rule, there is nothing left to dispute. But does that mean that we must needs also cease to mourn? O Moghul soldier! all the world over, the Mother is loved and revered. Shall we alone be forbidden the right to love our sweet mother. Mevar?

HIDAYAT. No.....you are not to sing the song which you have just been singing.

ARUN. We will sing! Who shall prevent us? My sisters, sing!

HIDAYAT: If you disobey me, I shall have to take you all prisoners.

SATYAVATI. Soldier, you may. Come, we are ready. We shall sit in the gloom of your prison and make it resound with our deep and sorrowful song. My son, let us sing.

HIDAYAT. Well then, I declare you my prisoners. (*He steps forward*).

ARUN. Beware! (*He draws his sword*) You touch my mother at your peril.

HIDAYAT. Impudent young rascal! Put up your weapon.

ARUN. Snatch it away if you dare.

The soldiers attack Arun. Arun fights them bravely.

SATYAVATI. Well done, my son, well done! Protect your mother.

One of the soldiers drops to the ground.

Well done, my son, well done! do not part with your weapon, while there is life within your limbs. That is all I ask of you for my sake. Oh, what triumph!

Hidayat Ali attacks Arun himself. Arun Singh battles with him while the soldiers surround him. Satyavati closes her eyes unable to look on while death hangs over her son. At this moment enter Mohabat Khan.

MOHABAT. Enough, Hidayat Ali! enough, I say! Are you not ashamed of yourself? Two Moghul soldiers pitted against one helpless boy, and not content with that, you must draw your sword too. Shame, a thousand times shame! Brave boy, may God bless you! You were ready to save your mother at the cost of your own life.

Satyavati presses her hands to her bosom and gazes into Arun's face in deep delight. Then she advances towards Mohabat Khan, but suddenly bowing her head, retraces her steps. Mohabat looks her full in the face.

MOHABAT. Sister! what can I have to say to you? I dare not even claim the right to call you sister. Forgive me, O forgive me!

SATYAVATI. O god, what irony is this? To think that my own younger brother should call upon me, and yet I cannot take him to my breast! O!

ARUN. Mother, who is he?

SATYAVATI. He is the Moghul Commander, Mohabat Khan.

MOHABAT. I am your mother's brother.

SATYAVATI. Come, my son, let us go.

MOHABAT. Where can you go? O, give me your pardon first!

SATYAVATI. Do you know what sin you have committed, Mohabat?

MOHABAT. I do. I have set fire to my own house, and with fiendish joy have watched the flames and smoke.

SATYAVATI. Is that all?

MOHABAT. And what besides? Perhaps, you mean, that I sinned when I embraced Islam? But there I do not hold with you. Each one of us has a right to his own beliefs....

SATYAVATI. Enough, Come, my son.

MOHABAT. Stay yet awhile. And even if it was sin... was it one which can wipe out all the tender feelings and noble qualities in the human heart? Sister, I know that a woman's heart is pure as a lake at evening time, as sweet as a garden of roses;

her soul is the mirror of the sky. Is this world so harsh and relentless that it can transform even a thing so delicate and divine as a woman's heart into a block of stone? Pray, forget for one moment that you are a Hindu and I a Moslem, that you are the oppressed and I the oppressor. Remember only this: that you are a woman and I am a man, that I am the brother and you are the sister. Recall for one moment our childhood's days when you carried me in your gentle arms, and smothered my cheeks in kisses, and rocked me to sleep in your lap. Remember that we are two motherless children, sister and brother....Sister!

SATYAVATI. O my God!

MOHABAT. Sister.

SATYAVATI. I cannot bear it any longer. What is fate, must be. My little brother, I forgive you all your sins....my little brother! I pray to the Lord of his tenderness and mercy to forgive you too. You are no longer the Commander of the Moghuls to me. You are once again the younger brother of long ago. Go now, brother.

MOHABAT. Farewell, sister. (*He prostrates himself before her*).

SATYAVATI. Long life to you. Come away, my son.

HIDAYAT. Where are you going? We have made you our prisoners.

MOHABAT. I should like to see the man that dared to touch so much as a hair of my sister's sacred head while I stand by to protect her. Go, sister, go unharmed.

HIDAYAT. You are Commander no more, Mohabat Khan. We are not bound to obey you now, nor do we care what you say. Shahzada Khuram is our Commander.

Enter Shahzada Khuram.

SHAHJAHAN. I myself give you leave to go, mother. Go home, and fear nothing.

HIDAYAT. But this woman wanders about from place to place singing seditious songs.

SHAHJAHAN. I heard that song from a distance. It is a deeply sorrowful and moving song.

HIDAYAT. But if it should stir the country up to revolt and disturb the peace of the land?

SHAHJAHAN. The Moghul Emperor knows how to quell unrest, Hidayat Ali Khan! Why speak of Mevar alone? I say that if the whole Kingdom of India were to vanish away like an autumn cloud before the frail breath of such a song, then—let it vanish, it is not worth the keeping. The empire of the Moghuls was never built on such airy foundations. It is built on the rock of love and devotion, the loyalty of the men and women and children of India. The Moghul Emperor will never stand in the

way of those who worship the motherland with pure and single hearts.

HIDAYAT. The Emperor's commands must be obeyed.

SHAHJAHAN. Sing on, sing on, young mother! I do not grieve because you sing this song, but I grieve to think how few are the mourners left in Mevar to hear it. I will listen to that song, young mother, sing on fearlessly. I too may mingle my tears and weep for the fallen glory of Mevar. Come, soldiers, come Hidayat Ali, let us join in their song...come!

Scene VI.

The banks of the Udaisagar, on a cloudy evening. Rana Amar Singh alone.

RANA. The sky of Mevar is muttering with suppressed fury. The mountains of Mevar are hiding their crests behind a veil of shame. The household gods of Mevar turn their faces away in deep humiliation. Mevar's downfall! ...yes, she has fallen, Mevar the mighty Rana Pratap's Kingdom, time-hallowed and this was the hand thatO.... (*He paces up and down*) Ah at last he comes!

Enter Mohabat Khan.

I salute you, great general!

MOHABAT. Victory to the Rana of Mevar.

RANA. Commander of the Moghuls! I see that you are not only skilled in the art of murder, but that you are something of an adept also in the art of mockery. Victory to Mevar's Rana? Victory indeed! But why mock now?

MOHABAT. No, Rana. I did not speak in mockery.

RANA. Well, let that pass, it is of little account. What I wished was to meet with you for once.

MOHABAT. Command me.

RANA. The very pink of courtesy!Listen. I sent for you to request one thing which none but you can concede.

MOHABAT. You have only to command me.

RANA. Look me well in the eyes, Mohabat! (*They gaze at each other intently for several moments*) Tell me who you are to me.

MOHABAT. I am your brother, your first cousin.

RANA. You have, indeed, done a deed that well befits a brother. You have helped the Moghuls to trample upon the land of your fathers. You have stained your hands in the blood of your kith and kin. You have —

MOHABAT. Rana, you forget that I have eaten the salt of the Emperor.

RANA. And when was that, Mohabat, and when was that? But let it pass. You have done your work. To gird at you would be idle now. —More especially as your handi-work is perhaps not altogether ill-suited to one who lives on the charity of our enemies—who has laughed our traditions to scorn—who shamelessly champions unbridled licence in the name of liberty—who—but where's the use?...Listen, Mohabat. You have all but devastated Mevar; the devastation is not yet complete. You have yet to make an end of the Rana of Mevar....Here is the sword. Take it and run me through. (*Gives the sword*).

MOHABAT. Rana....

RANA. Why do you hesitate, Mohabat? Surely not because this act can blacken your conscience one shade the more? Remember too, that in asking you this favour, I am asking nothing which is not already dear to your heart. For do I not know that you are thirsting—thirsting most terribly—for my blood?—there—your right hand is all a-tremble to be tearing at my heart. See, here it lies. Kill me and you shall have your dearest wish.

MOHABAT. Rana! Mohabat Khan has not fallen so low. It is true that I have spread desolation through Mevar with my sword....yet I claim that I have not fought wrongfully. If I have waged war—it was a just war from first to last.

RANA. A just war, Mohabat? A just war? How can you call war just when a mere handful of half-armed men are ground to dust under the heels of a vast and over-whelming horde? Call it anything—call it hell's fury let loose on the soul of an innocent babe....a whirlwind of waters to drown the light of one candle, a cataclysmic avalanche, blasting the life of a blossoming rose—but, a just war, Mohabat! —what am I saying? Let it pass, let it pass....you have won and that is enough. Here, take this sword now. This was the sword the Rana Pratap gave me as he lay on his death bed, "See that it is not dishonoured," he said. But I have brought dishonour upon its hallowed blade. Now let the dishonour be washed away in my repentant blood.

MOHABAT. Rana, I refuse. Mohabat Khan is a warrior and not a murderer.

RANA. Then fight. Take up your weapon. (*He snatches the sword*).

MOHABAT. Rana, I have sworn never again to draw my sword against Mevar.

RANA. And when was that, Mohabat, and when was that? It will not do, I tell you. Take up your weapon, I now invite you to a duel, a duel to the death on the funeral field of Mevar and lo, on my shoulders I bear the dead body of my Mother. So you may not decline this sacred challenge.

MOHABAT. Rana, listen.

RANA. I will not hear another word. You are a coward, a parasite, a traitor. Come, I dare you to a duel. I should dearly love to measure the worth of that prowess which caused all Hindustan to tremble at your name, Mohabat Khan. Come take up your weapon, I say. I will not rest content until you have done so. Vile worm, foul rake-helly fiend!

MOHABAT. Very well then, Rana, I accept your challenge. *(He unsheathes his sword)* Beware, Rana! If there is a man to match Mohabat in the whole of Mevar, that man is you...yet I tell you to think twice before you enter into a duel with me.

They flourish their swords.

RANA. To-day brother fights brother....and it will be a spectacle for the gods to see.

Just at this juncture Manasi rushes in with dishevelled hair and comes between them.

MANASI. What are you two doing, father? What does this mean? *(To Mohabat Khan)* Have done, sir.

RANA. Go away from this spot, Manasi. You must not stand between us and our quarrel.

MANASI. Father, have done. The tale of the havoc wrought is already dark enough. You shall not add to the sum of horror with this unbrotherly strife. How can murder and revenge help us to heal the wounds and console us in this fearful tragedy? All that we can hope to do is to forget the wrong and rise above ourselves once more.

RANA. I do not understand you, Manasi.

MANASI. Come, my sisters, sing, sing aloud the song our hearts can understand but the mind still questions.

Enter Manasi's band of peasant women dressed in saffron-coloured saris, followed by Satyavati....Rana Amar Singh and Mohabat Khan attend in silence strangely moved. They sing in chorus, Manasi leads in place of Satyavati.

Why vainly shed thy tears, comrade,
And sigh: 'Our freedom's gone!'
Sing from the summit of thy stature:
'I live for Truth alone.'

Why wouldst thou still the others indict?
Thy little ego thou must fight:
Not for the others art thou fallen,
'Tis Falsehood holds thee down'
Sing from the summit of thy stature:
'I live for Truth alone.'

ACT V—SCENE VI

All o'er the world two forces battle,—
Darkness opposed to Light:
Loyal to Heaven's solar legion,
Confront Hell's hordes of Night.

Forget all thoughts of thine and mine,
Behold in all the one Divine,
Unfrontiered earth's thy home and country:
The house of self disown;
Sing from the summit of thy stature:
'I live for Truth alone.'

If thou wouldst slay this gloom abysmal,
Waken thy Sun within,
And discover in its dawn: no alien
But is a brother of kin.

Affianced to thy sentinel soul,
With God as Guru and the Goal,
Disclaim thy pride of race and country,
For the soul belongs to none
But the Lord of Truth and Love everlasting,
Live thou for Him alone.